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Mr Drew

The Frame

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DEAD-SEA FRUIT

A Novel

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET,"

ETC., ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

FIFTH EDITION.

LONDON

WARD, LOCK, AND TYLER

WARWICK HOUSE, PATERNOSTER ROW

1868.

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CONTENTS.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	VALE	1
II.	"STILL FROM ONE SORROW TO ANOTHER THROWN"	25
III.	LEFT ALONE	36
IV.	THE MORLAND COUGH	46
V.	LUCY'S FAREWELL TO THE STAGE	63
VI.	"COULD LOVE PART THUS?"	88
VII.	A SUMMER STORM	112
VIII.	A FINAL INTERVIEW	143
IX.	TIMELY BANISHMENT	158
X.	SIT TIBI TERRA LEVIS	169
XI.	HIDDEN HOPES	182
XII.	NORTHWARD	204
XIII.	HALKO'S HEAD	216
XIV.	HOPELESS	233
XV.	STRONGER THAN DEATH	298
XVI.	RECONCILED	322

DEAD-SEA FRUIT.

CHAPTER I.

VALE.

"At my own quarters trouble unutterable awaited me. While I had amused myself with the more piquant society of Gulnare, my sad sweet love—my Medora—had fled from her solitary bower. I found my household gods shattered; and standing among their ruins, I was fain to confess that I had deserved the stroke. She was gone. The poor child had borne my absence so uncomplainingly that I had been almost inclined to resent a patience that seemed like coldness. Had she been more demonstrative—had her affection or her jealousy assumed a more dramatic and soul-stirring form—it might have been better for

both of us. But the poor child locked all her feelings so closely in her breast, that she had of late seemed to me the tamest and dullest of womankind—an automaton with a woe-begone face.

"The woman who waited upon her in that rude mountain home told me that she was gone. She had gone out early in the day—soon after my own departure—and had not been seen since that time. She had seen me in a carriage with a strange lady, and had, by some means, possessed herself of the secret of my visits to the lodge in the valley. This very woman had, perhaps, been C.'s informant, though she stoutly denied the fact when I taxed her with it.

"She was gone. It mattered little how she had obtained the information that had prompted her to this mad act. For some minutes I stood motionless on the spot where I had heard these tidings, powerless to decide what I ought to do. And then, sudden as a shaft of Apollo the destroyer, there darted

into my brain the idea of suicide. That poor benighted child had left her cheerless home to destroy herself.

"I rushed from the house, pausing only to bid the woman send her husband after me with a lantern and a rope. What I was going to do I knew not. My first impulse was to seek her myself, along that desolate coast. She might wander for hours by the sea she loved so well, shrinking from that cold refuge, loth to fling herself into the strong arms of that stern lover for whom she would fain forsake me.

"I waited only till I saw D. emerge with his dimly-twinkling light, called to him to follow me, and then ran down the craggy winding way—the Devil's Staircase—to the sands below.

"And then I remembered the heights above me—the little classic temple in which we had so often sat—and I shivered as I thought what a fearful leap madness might take from that rocky headland. I had told C. the story of

Sappho,—of course giving her the ideal Sappho of modern poesy, and not the flaunting, wine-bibbing, strong-minded, wrong-minded Mitylenean lady of Attic comedy,—and we had agreed that Phaon—if indeed there ever existed such a person—was a monster.

"As I hurried along those lonely sands, dark with the shadows of the heights above, I remembered the soft spring sunset in which I had related the well-worn fable, and I could almost feel my love's little hand clinging tenderly to my arm—the hand whose gentle touch I never was to feel again.

"I will not excruciate thee, reader, or bore thee, as the case may be, by one of those prolonged intervals of suspense whereby the venal hack of the Minerva Press would attempt to harrow thy feelings, and eke out his tale of strawless brick. For thee, too, life has had its fond hopes and idle dreams, its bitter disappointments, chilling disillusions, dark hours of remorse.

"Enough that in this crisis I suffered—

suffered as I have never suffered since that day. My search was in vain; nor were the efforts of the men whom I sent in all directions of the coast—by the cliff and by the sands—of more avail. For two days and two nights I suffered the tortures of Cain. I told myself that this girl's blood was upon my head; and if, in that hour when the thought of her untimely death was so keen and unendurable an agony, she could have appeared suddenly before me, I think I should have thrown myself at her feet and offered her the devotion of my life, the legal right to bear my name.

"She did not so appear, and the hour passed. Upon the third morning, after a delay that had seemed an eternity of torture, the post brought me a letter from C. She was at E——, whither she had gone, after long brooding upon my inconstancy.

'I will not try to tell you all I have suffered,' she wrote; 'my most psssionate words would seem to you cold and meaningless when measured against those Greek poets whose

verse is your standard for every feeling. I will only say you have broken my heart. My story begins and ends in that one sentence. There must come an end even to such worship as mine. Oh! H., you have been very cruel to me! I have seen you with the beautiful foreign lady, whose society has been pleasanter to you than mine. Your carriage drove past me one day, as I stood half-hidden by the bushes upon a sloping bank above the road, and I heard her joyous laugh, and saw your head bent over her long dark ringlets, and knew that you were happy with her.

'From the hour in which I discovered how utterly you had deceived me, my life has been one continued struggle with despair. You do not know how I loved those whom I left for your sake. In all the passion and pain of your Greek poetry, I doubt if there is a sentence strong enough to express the agony that I feel when I think of those dear friends, and stretch out my arms to them across the gulf that yawns between us. You read me a de-

scription of the ghosts in the dark under-world one day, before you had grown too weary of me to let me share your thoughts. I feel like those ghosts, H.

'Why should I tire you with a long letter? I leave you free to find happiness with the lady whose name even I do not know.

'Perhaps some day, when you are growing old, and have become weary of all the pleasures upon earth, you will think a little more tenderly of her who thought it a small thing to peril her soul in the hope of giving you happiness, and who awoke from her fond, foolish dream, to find, with anguish unspeakable, that the sacrifice had been as vain as it was wicked.'

"This letter melted me; and yet I was inclined to be angry with C. for the unnecessary pain her abrupt disappearance had inflicted upon me. I was divided between this feeling and the relief of mind afforded by the knowledge that my folly had not resulted in any fatal event. She had gone to E—— in a fit of jealousy, and she favoured me with the

usual feminine reproaches so natural to the narrow female intellect—imagine a *man* reminding his friend at every turn of the sacrifices he had made for friendship!—and she sent me the address of that humble inn where she had taken up her abode, and of course expected me to hasten thither as fast as post-horses could convey me.

"Nothing could be more hackneyed than the end of the little romance. I will not say that I was capable of feeling disappointed because the poor child had not drowned herself; but I confess that this commonplace turn which the affair had taken, grated on my sense of the poetical. It is possible that I had indeed learnt to measure everything by the standard of Greek verse; certain it is that it seemed a sinking in poetry to descend from Sappho's fatal leap to a commercial-travellers' tavern at E——.

'I will start for E—— to morrow morning,' I said to myself; but without enthusiasm.

"Had I rescued my love from all-devouring ocean—had I found her wandering half-crazed

upon the mountains, like that lorn maiden whom even savage beasts compassionated, when she roamed disconsolate, crying,

'Tall grow the forest trees, O Menalcas,'—

I think I should have taken her to my heart of hearts, and sacrificed my freedom to secure her happiness. But this departure for E ——, and the long reproachful letter, savoured of calculation; and against the manœuvres of feminine diplomacy I wore the armour of experience.

"I ordered post-horses for the following morning, and then set off in the direction of my friend's hunting-lodge. 'My bosom's lord sat lightly on his throne,' relieved from the burden of a great terror; but poor C.'s dreary letter was not calculated to put me in high spirits, and I hastened to refresh myself with the society of the sparkling Carlitz.

"I languished for the frivolous talk of people and places I knew—the *olla-podrida* of sentiments and fancies, facts and fictions, spiced with that dash of originality, or at the least audacity, wherewith an accomplished wo-

man of the world flavours her small-talk. Lightly and swiftly I trod the hill-side, pleased when the blue smoke curling from the familiar chimneys met my eager eyes.

'Is it possible that I am in love with this woman?' I asked myself, wonderingly.

"And then I remembered my despair and terror of yesterday, and the fond regret with which I had thought of poor C., yearning to clasp her to my heart, to promise eternal fidelity.

"The hour had passed. I tried in vain to recall the feeling. I felt that it was more worthy of me than the fickle fancy which led me to the feet of Madame Carlitz; but man is the creature of circumstance, and my best feelings had been *froissé* by the conventional aspect which C's flight had assumed.

"A deep-mouthed thunder greeted me as I entered E. T.'s domain, the bass bow-wowing of some canine monster.

'What new fancy?' I asked myself, as a huge mastiff ran out at me, and made as if he would

have rent me limb from limb. I was half inclined to seat myself on the ground, after the example of Ulysses, and the accomplished Mure of Cladwell; but before the creature could commence operations a familiar voice called to him, and E. T. himself emerged from the porch.

'My dear H.,' he exclaimed, 'what an unexpected felicity! I thought you were at Vienna.'

'Indeed! I cried, somewhat piqued. 'Has not Madame Carlitz told you of my whereabouts?'

'I have not seen her.'

'You have not seen her!' I exclaimed, in utter bewilderment.

'No. Madame left yesterday morning with Mr. and Mrs. H. I only arrived last night. Come indoors, old fellow, and let us hear your adventures since our last meeting.

"I followed my friend across the little hall into the bare, tobacco-scented, bachelor sitting-room. The enchanter's wand had been waived a second time, and the fairy vision had melted

into thin air. Tiny dogs, dainty and fragile as animated Dresden china, ribbon-adorned guitar, satin-lined work-baskets, velvet-bound blotting-books, *déjeûners* in old Vienna porcelain, card-bowl of priceless Worcester, leopard-skins, lounging-chairs, *portière*, and French prints had vanished; and in the place which these frivolities had embellished, I beheld the bare battered writing-table and shabby smoking-apparatus of my reckless friend, who stood with his arms a-kimbo, and a tawny-hided bull-dog between his legs, grinning—man and dog both, as it seemed to me—at my discomfiture.

'What!' cried E., 'it was for the divine Carlitz your visit was intended? My shepherd told me there had been a fine London gentleman hanging about the place while madame and her following were here; but he could not tell me the fine gentleman's name, and I little thought you were he. Come, my dear boy, fill yourself a pipe, and let's talk over old times. You've been buried among your dryasdust books, I suppose, while I have been scouring

Northern Europe in pursuit of the rapid reindeer and the sulky salmon.'

'We'll talk as much as you like presently,' I replied, 'but just let me understand matters first. When I left madame and the H.'s the other night, it was understood they were to remain here some time longer. What took her to town? — is the Bonbonnière season to begin?'

'The Bonbonnière! My dear friend, this is really dreadful. The lamentable state of ignorance which results from the cultivation of polite learning is, to a plain man, something astounding. Learn, my benighted recluse, that the Bonbonnière Theatre will be opened for the performance of the legitimate drama early next month by the great Mackenzie, who inaugurates his season with the thrilling tragedy of *Coriolanus*, so interesting to the youthful mind from its association with the pleasing studies of boyhood. Madame Carlitz has sold her lease of the pretty little theatre; and on very advantageous terms, I assure you."

'She has sold her lease! Does she intend to leave the stage, or to take a larger theatre?

'She intends to do neither the one nor the other. She appears on a grander stage, and in an entirely new character. She is going to marry Lord V.'

'Impossible!

'An established fact, my dear boy. The noble earl, as the fashionable journalists call him, has been nibbling at the enchantress's bait for the last twelve months—rather a difficult customer to land, you know—turned sulky when he felt the hook in his jaw, and got away among the rushes; but Carlitz used her gaff, and brought him to land. And now the talk of the town is their impending union. The great ladies *de par le monde* intend to cut her, I believe; but Carlitz has announced her intention of taking the initiative, and cutting *them*. "I shall cultivate the foreign legations," she told little J. C. of the F. O., "and make myself independent of our home nobility." And, egad, she is capable of doing it! She is

like Robespierre,—*elle ira loin*,—because she believes in herself.

'But Carlitz!' I gasped; 'has she got a divorce?'

'My benighted friend, the decease of M. Carlitz, or Don Estephan Carlitz, of the Spanish wine-trade, is an event as notorious in modern history as the demise of that respectable sovereign, Queen Anne. He died three months ago at the Cape, whence it was his habit to import that choice Amontillado in which he dealt. Madame was prompt to improve the occasion offered by her widowhood; but I have heard it whispered that the noble earl made it a condition that she should clear herself of debt before—to continue the fashionable journalist's phrase—he led her to the hymeneal altar. Of course you are aware that the noble earl is amongst the meanest of mankind.'

"Yes, I knew V., a little middle-aged man, suspected of wearing a wig, and renowned for harmless eccentricities in the way of amateur coach-building. Alas, what perfidy! Those

bright, sympathetic glances, those tender smiles, those low tremulous tones, had been all a part of one coldly-calculated design—the lady-like extortion of so much ready money from the pockets of weak, adoring youth. The divine Estelle had been all this time the plighted wife of Lord V., and had traded upon my admiration in order to secure the means of purchasing a coronet.

"I burst into a savage laugh, and when E. pressed me with questions, I told him the whole story. He, too, laughed aloud, but with evident enjoyment. And then he told me how my wily enchantress had borrowed his rustic retreat, and had come to these remote fastnesses in order to exasperate poor vacillating V. into a tangible offer, and how she had succeeded.

'I was staying with another fellow further south,' said my friend, 'and received a few lines from madame the day before yesterday, resigning possession of my shanty, and announcing her approaching espousals; "you must come for the shooting at the Towers next

autumn," she said, in her postscript. Begins to patronize already, you see.'

"After this E. insisted on detaining me to dine with him. Our dinner was ill-cooked, ill-served; and my friend's conversation was a mixture of London gossip and Norwegian sporting experiences. How I loathed the empty, vapid talk! How I envied this mindless animal his barbarous pleasure in the extermination of other animals, little inferior to himself! I went back to my own quarters in a savage humour, and it seemed to me that my anger included all womankind.

'I have been fooled and deluded by one woman,' I said to myself; 'I will not give myself a prey into the hands of another. C. has chosen to inaugurate our separation. I will not attempt to reverse her decision. My duty I am prepared to do; but I will do no more.'

"Thus resolved, I seated myself at my rough study-table, and wrote a long letter to C.—a very serious, and I think a sufficiently kind,

letter—in which I set forth the state of my own feelings. 'I had hoped that we should find perfect happiness in each other's society,' I wrote, in conclusion; 'I need scarcely tell you that hope has been most cruelly disappointed. You were the first to show that our happiness was an impossibility. You have been the first to sever the tie which I had fondly believed would be lasting. I accept your decision; but I do not consider myself absolved from the duty of providing for your future. For myself, I shall leave Europe for a wilder and more interesting hemisphere, where I shall endeavour to find forgetfulness of the bitter disappointments that have befallen me here.'

"I then told C. how I designed immediately to open an account for her at a certain bank, upon which she would be at liberty to draw at the rate of four hundred a year.

'Have no fear for the future,' I wrote; 'a lady with a settled income of four hundred a year can find friends in any quarter of the

globe, and need never be troubled with impertinent inquiries about her antecedents. I shall always be glad to hear of your welfare ; and if you will keep me acquainted with your whereabouts—letters addressed to the "Travellers" will always reach me—I shall make a point of seeking you out on my return to England.'

"This letter I despatched, and the chaise that was to have taken me to E—— took me to London, where I made the necessary arrangements with my banker, and whence I departed for a tour of exploration in South America.

"It was after two years' absence that I returned to discover that the account opened in C.'s name had never been drawn upon. And thus ended the story that had opened like an idyll. I have sometimes feared that an unhappy fate must have overtaken this poor foolish girl, and my recollection of her is not unmixed with remorse. But I have reflected that it was more likely her beauty had secured her an advantageous marriage, and that she

was unable to avail herself of the provision I had made for her.

"I instituted a careful inquiry, in the hope of discovering her fate, but without result. Her parents at B—— were both dead—strange fatality!—and from no other source could I obtain tidings of my poor C. M. Thus ended my brief, broken love-story. It was with a feeling of relief that I told myself it had thus ended; for I could but remember that the course of events might have taken a very different turn, and one for me most embarrassing.

"If C. had been a woman of the world, or if she had fallen into the hands of some legal adventurer, I might have found myself fixed with a wife, and bound by a chain not to be broken on this side the grave. As it is, I retain my freedom, and only in my most pensive and sombre hours does the pale shadow of that half-forgotten love arise before me, gently reproachful.

"And in these rare intervals of life's busy conflict, when the press and hurry give pause,

and I sit alone in my tent, the words of the poor child's letter come back to me with a strange significance. *Perhaps some day, when you are growing old and have become weary of all the pleasures upon earth, you will think a little more tenderly of her who thought it a small thing to peril her soul in the hope of giving you happiness.*

"Life's intricate journey has so many cross-roads. Who can tell whether he has not sometimes taken the wrong turning? Should I have been happier if I had given C. a legal right to bore me for the remainder of my existence? Happier! For me there is no such possibility. To be happier, a man must first be happy; and happiness is a bright phantom which I have vainly pursued for the last fifteen years. I should at best have been differently miserable.

"I am still free, and I meet the lovely Lady V. in that seventh heaven of the great world to which she has contrived to push her way, and she gives me a patronizing smile and

a lofty inclination of her beautiful head; and it is tacitly agreed between us that our rambles and picnics beneath the snow-clad hills are to be as the dreams of days that never were."

Here the *Disappointments of Dion* lost its chief interest for Eustace Thorburn, for here the record of his mother's hapless love ended. Beyond this, and to the very close, he had read the book carefully, weighing every sentence, for it was the epitome of his father's character. In every line there was egotism, in every page the confession of energies and talents wasted in the pursuit of personal gratification. For ever and for ever, the weary wretch pursues the same worthless prize—the prize more difficult of attainment than the new world of a Columbus, or the new planet of a Herschel. With less pains a man might achieve a result that would be a lasting heritage for his fellow-men, and might die with the proud boast of Ulysses on his lips—"I am become a name!"

Through fair and sunny Italy; in wild Norse-

land; in the granite and marble palaces of St. Petersburg; nay, beyond Caucasian mounts and valleys; amid the ruins of Persepolis; across the sandy wastes, and by the snow-clad mountains of Afghanistan; deep into the heart of Hindostan,—the worldling had pursued his phantom prey; and everywhere, in civilized city or in tiger-haunted jungle, the hunter after happiness found only disappointment.

"A tiger-hunt is the dreariest thing imaginable," he wrote; "it is all waiting and watching, and prowling and lurking behind bushes; a dastardly, sneaking business, which makes one feel more ignoble than the tiger. For genuine excitement the race for the Derby is better; and a man can enjoy a fever of expectation at Epsom which he cannot equal in Bengal."

And anon; "That most musical and meretricious of poets, Thomas Moore, has a great deal to answer for. I have been all through the East in search of his Light of the Harem, and have found only darkness, or the merest rush-

lights, the faintest twinkling tapers that ever glimmered through their brief span. And so I return disappointed from the Eastern world, to seek new disappointments in the West."

CHAPTER II.

"STILL FROM ONE SORROW TO ANOTHER THROWN."

EUSTACE closed the book with a sigh—a sigh for the father he had never known, the father who had never known his birth; a sigh for the mother whose life had been sacrificed on so poor an altar. He had been reading for some hours with very little consciousness of the passage of time.

"You seem to be interested in that book, Mr. Thorburn," said a familiar voice from the bank above him.

He started to his feet, dropped his book, turned, and looked up at the speaker. The voice was the voice of Harold Jerningham; and that gentleman was standing on the bank, pointing downward at the fallen book with the tip of his extended cane, as he might have pointed to some creature of the reptile tribe.

"You startled me a little, Mr. Jerningham," said Eustace, as he stooped to pick up the book.

"Your study must have been deeply interesting to you, or you could scarcely have been so unconscious of my footsteps. Permit me." He took the volume from the young man's hand and turned the leaves listlessly. "One of your favourite dialogues, I suppose? No; an English novel. *Dion! Dion?* I have some recollection of a book called *Dion*. What a very shabby person he looks after the lapse of years! Really, the authors of that time suffered some disadvantage at the hands of their publishers. What dismal gray binding! what meagre-looking type! The very paper has a musty odour. And you are deeply interested in *Dion?*"

"Yes; I am deeply interested."

"The book strikes you as powerful?

"No. The writer strikes me as a consummate scoundrel."

Mr. Jerningham smiled, a faint smile. His smiles were for the most part faint and wan,

like the smiles of a wandering spirit in the house of Hades.

"Do not be so energetic in your denunciation, Mr. Thorburn," he said, quietly. "The man who wrote *Dion* was as other men of his time —just a little selfish, perhaps, and anxious to travel on the sunny side of the great highway."

"Did you know him?" asked Eustace, with sudden eagerness.

"Not the least in the world. But I know his book. People talked of it a little at the time, and there was some discussion about the authorship; all kinds of improbable persons were suggested. Yes; it all comes back to me as I look at the pages. A very poor book; stilted, affected, coxcombical. What a fool the man must have been to print such a piece of egotism!"

"Yes. It seems strange that any man could publish a book for the purpose of proclaiming himself a villain."

"Not at all. But it is strange that a man

can give his villany to the world in a *poor* book—a book not containing one element of literary success; and that he should take the trouble of writing all this. Yes, it is very strange. An indolent kind of man, too—as one would imagine from the book. A very feeble book! I see a wrong tense here in a Latin quotation. The man did not even know his Catullus. Thanks."

Mr. Jerningham returned the volume with a graceful listlessness and with a half-regretful sigh, as if it wearied him even to remember so feeble a book. He strolled away, leaving Eustace wondering that he should have fallen across a man who was familiar with his father's book, and who in person resembled his father.

"If Mr. Jerningham had written his own biography, it might have been something like this book," he said to himself. And then another IF—stupendous, terrible—presented itself to his mind.

But this he dismissed as an absurd and groundless fancy.

"What accident is more common than such a likeness as that between us two?" he asked of himself. "The world is full of such half-resemblances, to say nothing of the Lesurges and Debosques who are guillotined in mistake for one another."

He left the seat on the river-bank, and strolled slowly homeward by a different path from that Mr. Jerningham had taken.

His reperusal of the book had been upon one point conclusive to him. The few details of the scene had told him at first that it had been laid in the British dominions. Reflection convinced him that Scotland was the locality of that solitary mountain habitation where his mother's sad days had been spent.

This had been Celia's unknown power. This habitation upon Scottish soil was the hold which she had possessed over her lover. In the character of his wife he had brought her to Scotland, and there had made his domicile with her during a period of several months; and by the right of that Scottish home, that open ac-

knowledgment, she *was* his wife. She had fled from him, unconscious of this. But if she had been conscious of this power, her son told himself that she would have been too noble to use it; too proud to call herself a wife by favour of a legal quibble.

"I will talk it over with Uncle Dan," Eustace said to himself; "and if he and I are agreed upon the subject, I will go to Scotland and hunt out the scene, supposing that to be possible from so slight a clue as this book will give us."

He knew that by the law of Scotland he was in all probability legitimatized; but not for the wealth of Scotland would he have sought to establish such a claim upon that nameless father, whom of all men that ever lived upon this earth he most despised.

"He abandoned her to lonely self-upbraiding, long, dreary days of remorse, humiliation, sorrow past all comfort—the thought of the sorrow her sin had wrought for those she loved. He let her bear this bitter burden without one

effort to lighten or to share it. He deserted the woman he had destroyed, because—she did not amuse him. Is this what wealth, and polite letters, and civilization make of a man? God forbid! Such a man should have worn imperial purple, and died the imperator's common death in the days of Rome's decadence. He is an anachronism in a Christian age."

He walked slowly back to the cottage, where he had but just time to dress for dinner. The evening passed quietly. Of the four people assembled in M. de Bergerac's drawing room, three were singularly quiet and thoughtful.

The summer dusk favoured silent meditation. Mr. Jerningham sat apart in a garden-chair under the long, rustic verandah, half-curtained with trailing branches of clematis and honeysuckle; Eustace sat in the darkest corner of the low drawing-room, where Helen occupied herself in playing dreamy German melodies upon her piano. M. de Bergerac strolled up and down before the lawn, stopping every

now and then to say something to his friend Harold Jerningham.

"How silent and thoughtful we are to-night!" he cried at last, after having received more than one random answer from the master of Greenlands. "One would think you had seen a ghost, Harold; your eyes are fixed, like the eyes of Brutus at Philippi, or of Agamemnon when the warning shade of Achilles appeared to him, before the sailing of the ship that was to take him home—to death. What is the phantom at which you gaze with eyes of gloom?"

"The ghost of the Past," answered Mr. Jerningham, as he rose to join his friend. "Not to Lot's wife alone is it fatal to look back. I have been looking back to-day, Theodore."

Within, all was silent except the piano, softly touched by slow, gentle hands, that stole along the keys in a languid, legato movement.

The player wondered at the change which had come upon her companion and fellow-student, and wondered to find the change in him so keen a sorrow to herself.

Very gloomy were the thoughts of Eustace as he sat in his dark corner, with closed eyes, and hands clasped above his head.

"How dare I tell him who and what I am, and then ask for the hand of his only daughter? Can I hope that even his simplicity will pardon such a family history as that which I must tell?"

All through the dark hours of that midsummer night he lay awake, brooding over the pages he had read, and thinking of the stain upon his name. To an older man, steeped in the hard wisdom of the world, the stigma would have been a lesser agony. He would have counted over to himself the list of great names made by the men who bore them, and would have found for himself crumbs of comfort. But for Eustace there was none. He had set up his divinity, and it seemed to him that only

the richest tribute could be offered upon a shrine so pure.

His thoughts deepened in gloom as the night waned, until the fever in his mind assumed the force of inspiration. Rash and impetuous as youth and poetry, he resolved that for him hope there was none, except far a-field of this Arcadian dwelling.

"Shall I offer myself, nameless, in order to be refused?" he asked. "No. I will leave this too dear home, and go out into the world to make myself a name among modern poets before I ask confession or promise of Helen de Bergerac."

To make himself a name among modern poets! The dream was a bold one. But the dreamer told himself that the ladder of Fame is sometimes mounted with a rush, and that for the successful writer of magazine lyrics it needs but a year or so of isolation and concentrated labour, a year or so of fervent devotion in the temple of Apollo, a year or so of poetic quietism, to accomplish the one great

work which shall transform the graceful singer of modern Horatian odes into the world-renowned poet.

"I will tear myself away from this place before the week is out," he said, with resolution that made the words a vow; "'tis too bright, too beautiful, too happy, and is dangerous as Armida's garden for the man who would fain serve apprenticeship to the Muses."

CHAPTER III.

LEFT ALONE.

While Mr. Jerningham dawdled away existence among the woods and hills of Berkshire, his wife's life was marked by changes more eventful, and ruffled by deeper passions.

To Lucy Alford the lady of River Lawn had shown herself a kind and generous friend. Not long had the poor child enjoyed the luxurious quiet of the Hampton villa when she was suddenly summoned away from it. Mr. Desmond had managed her father's affairs and pacified her father's creditors; with what pecuniary sacrifice was only known to himself. But a sterner gaoler than the warder of Whitecross Street lay in wait for Lucy's father, ready to stretch forth the icy hand that was to arrest that battered and broken wayfarer.

Debts and difficulties, disappointments and humiliations, with constant habits of inebriation, had done their fatal work for Tristram Alford. 'Twas but a poor wreck of humanity which emerged from the dreary city prison, when Laurence told his old tutor that he was free. The old man had suffered from one paralytic seizure long ago, in his better days of private tutorship. He had a second seizure in the Whitecross Street ward, but made light of the attack; and although he knew himself to be a wreck, was happily unconscious how near was the hour of his sinking.

Lucy returned to the dreary Islington lodgings, to find her father strangely, nay, indeed, alarmingly, altered. She wrote to Mrs. Jerningham to tell her fears, and Emily made haste to send a physician to see the invalid. The physician shook his head despondently, but recommended rest and change of air. These, with the aid of Mrs. Jerningham's ample purse, were easily procured, and Lucy and her father were despatched to Ventnor.

Laurence saw the physician, and asked for a candid opinion upon Tristram Alford's state.

"The man is a habitual drunkard," replied the doctor, "and has evidently been killing himself with brandy for the last ten years. If you take the brandy-bottle away from him, he will die; if you let him go on drinking, he will die. The case is beyond a cure. The man's brain is alcoholized. His next attack must be fatal."

Having once enlisted Mrs. Jerningham's friendship for Lucy Alford, Mr. Desmond felt that the young lady's fortunes had passed out of his care. Already Emily had shown herself so kind and generous that it would have been base ingratitude to doubt her charity in every new emergency. He therefore held himself aloof from Lucy and her father, and only from Mrs. Jerningham did he hear how it fared with the girl in whose fate he had taken so benevolent an interest. But while he made no overt attempt to comfort or assist her in the hour of trial and trouble, he thought of her,

and pitied her, with a constancy that was at once perplexing and unpleasing to his own mind.

"Poor little thing!" he said to himself, when he thought of the motherless girl watching the fading hours of her sole protector. And he wondered to perceive how much tenderness it was possible to infuse into those three common words. "Poor little thing! Tristram Alford cannot last many weeks—that is certain. And then—and then? She will be left quite alone in the world. And she must suppress all sign of her natural grief, and enact one of *those ladies*—ever so slightly expurgated—in *Côtelettes sautées chez Vefour*. What a dreary present! what a hopeless future!"

And at this point Mr. Desmond would dig his pen savagely into the paper, destroy the quill of an unoffending goose, and fling it from him in a sudden rage.

"What is it to me?" he asked himself. "There are hundreds of friendless girls in London for whom the future is as hopeless.

Am I going to turn Quixote, and ride a tilt against the windmills of modern civilization?"

One morning in February the editor of the *Areopagus* found an envelope edged with deepest black upon his breakfast-table. It contained a brief despairing scrawl from Lucy, smeared and blotted with many tears. Death had claimed his victim. The third seizure had come, and all was over.

"I cannot tell you how kind Mrs. Jerningham has been," wrote the mourner; "all is arranged for the funeral. It is to take place on Friday. My poor dear will rest in a pleasant spot. It is very hard to bear this parting; but I think it would have seemed harder to me if he had died in London." And then followed little pious sentences, in which faith struggled with despair.

"He was always good and kind," she wrote; "I cannot recall one cross word from his dear lips. He did not go to church so regularly as religious people think right; but he was very good. He read the Bible sometimes, and cried

over it; and wherever we lodged, the little children loved him. It was not in his nature to be harsh or unkind. May God teach me to be as good and gentle as he was, and grant that we may meet some day in a happier world!"

"The funeral is to be on Friday," repeated Mr. Desmond, when he had folded and put away the letter. He was on the point of endorsing it with the rest of his correspondence, but changed his mind, and laid it gently aside in a drawer of his desk. "Not amongst tradesmen's lies, and samples of double-crown, and contributors' complaints," he said. "On Friday? Yes; I will attend my poor old tutor's funeral. It will comfort her to think that *one* friend followed him to his grave."

Early on the appointed morning, Mr. Desmond knocked at the door of the Ventnor lodging-house.

"Miss Alford is at home, of course," he said to the maid. "Be so good as to take her this

card, and tell her that I have come to attend the funeral, but will not intrude upon her."

He spoke in a low voice; but those cautious, suppressed tones are of all accents the most penetrating. The door of the parlour was opened softly, and Mrs. Jerningham came out into the passage.

"I recognized your voice," she said. "How very good of you to come!"

"Not at all. But how good of *you* to come! I had no idea that I should meet you here."

"And I was quite sure that I should meet *you* here," replied Emily, with the faintest possible sneer.

"Is Lucy in that room?"

"Yes."

"I do not want to see her. I wished to show my regard for that poor old man. I spent many pleasant days under his roof, and he has made so lonely an ending. It is very good of you to come, Emily; and your presence here relieves me very much with regard to that poor girl's future. I do not think you would be

here if you were not really interested in her."

"Yes, Laurence; I am really interested in —your *protégée*."

"She is not my *protégée;* but I wish you to make her yours, because I scarcely think you could find a creature more in need of your charity. Poor child! she is very much distressed, I suppose."

"For the moment she is heartbroken. I shall take her away from here this evening."

"My dear Emily, I knew I was safe in relying on your noble nature!" exclaimed the editor, with enthusiasm.

"For pity's sake, do not be so grateful. I have done no more than I would for any other helpless woman whom fate flung across my path. In the whole affair there is only one element that makes the act a sacrifice."

"And that is——?"

"What only a woman can feel or understand. Pray, do not let us talk about it. The funeral will not take place for an hour."

"I will go and get a band for my hat, and return here for the ceremony. There will be one mourning-coach, I suppose."

"Yes. The doctor has kindly promised to act as chief mourner. There is no one else."

"Poor Tristram! If you only knew that man's appreciation of Greek; and Greek is the only language which requires a special genius in the scholar. And to die like this!"

Mr. Desmond departed to get his hat bound with the insignia of grief. Mrs. Jerningham went back to the parlour, where the orphan sat with listless hands loosely locked, and vacant, tearless eyes, lost in a stupor of grief. But even in this stupor she had recognized the voice of her dead father's only friend.

"Was not that Mr. Desmond in the passage just now?" she asked.

"Yes; he has come down to attend his old friend's funeral."

"How good of him! How kind you both are to me!" murmured Lucy. "Oh, believe me, I am grateful. And yet, dear Mrs. Jer-

ningham, I feel as if it would be better for me to be going to lie by *his* side in that peaceful grave."

"No, Lucy. Your life is all to come. You have known sorrow and trouble; but you have not drained the cup of happiness only to find the bitterness of the draught. *That* is real despair. You have not outlived your hopes, and your dreams and your faith—nay, indeed, your very self—as I have."

CHAPTER IV.

THE MORLAND COUGH.

Laurence Desmond heard the sublimely solemn service read above his old tutor's coffin, and left Ventnor without seeing Lucy Alford. Again and again he told himself that with the orphan girl's future fate he had no concern. He had given her a good friend—and a friend of her own sex—who would doubtless afford her help and protection, directly or indirectly, in the future.

"She has passed out of my life," he said to himself; "poor little thing! Let me forget that I ever saw her."

When Mr. Desmond paid his next visit to River Lawn he found Lucy comfortably installed there, and looking pale as the snowdrops in her

simple mourning. She said a few tremulous words in answer to his gentle greeting, and then left the room.

"She does not like to talk of her father," Mrs. Jerningham said, when she was gone; "and I dare say she has run away to escape your possible condolences. He seems on the whole to have been rather a worthless person, but she mourns him as if he had been a saint. 'We were so happy together,' she says; and then she tells me of his interest in her career, and the patience with which he would sit in the boxes night after night to see her act, and then would tell her the points in which she failed, and the points in which she succeeded, and lament the impossibility of her wearing a mask, with some dreadful pipe or mouthpiece, like the Greek actors; and she tells me of their cosy little suppers after the theatre, pettitoes—WHAT are pettitoes?—and baked potatoes, and sausages, and other dreadful things which it would be certain death for persons in society to eat; and so the poor child runs on. She is the most

affectionate, grateful creature I ever met, and I think she is beginning to love me."

"She has reason to do so," replied Mr. Desmond. "I suppose she will be obliged to go on the stage again. I have a promise of an engagement for her from my friend Hartstone."

"I hope she will not be obliged to accept it. Her father's death has caused a complete change in her feelings with regard to the dramatic profession. The poor old man's companionship seems to have supported and sustained her in all her petty trials—and now he has gone, she shrinks from encountering the difficulties of such a life. So, with my advice and such assistance as I can give her, she is trying to qualify herself for the position of governess. Her reading is more extensive than that of most girls, and she is working hard to supply the deficiencies of her education."

"I am very glad to hear that," Laurence answered, heartily; "I consider such a life much better suited to her than the uncertainties of a provincial theatre."

And then he remembered that in the existence of a governess there were also uncertainties, trials, temptations, loneliness; and it seemed to him as if Lucy Alford's destiny must be a care and a perplexity to him to the end of time.

"I shall keep Lucy with me for some weeks to come," said Mrs. Jerningham; "for I find her a most devoted little companion, and she is exercising her powers as my reader and amanuensis, in order to prepare herself for the caprices of some valetudinarian dowager in the future."

"You are very good, Emily."

"Yes, because I am of some use to your Miss Alford;—that is my virtue in your eyes, Laurence."

"If you are going to talk in that manner, I shall try to catch the next train."

"It is very absurd, is it not?" cried Mrs. Jerningham, with a light laugh; "but you see it is natural to a woman to be jealous; and a woman who lives in such a place as this has nothing to do but cherish jealous fancies."

"Let us understand each other once and for

ever," said Laurence, gravely. "To me Lucy Alford seems little more than a child: the time in which I used to see her frisking about with a hideous Scotch terrier, and dressed in a brown-holland pinafore, is not so very remote, you know. I found her in the most bitter need of a friend; and so far as I could befriend her, I did so, honestly, biding the time in which I could enlist a good woman's sympathy in her behalf. Having done that, I have done all, and I wash my hands of the whole affair. If there is the least hazard of jealousy where Miss Alford is concerned, I will not re-enter this house while she inhabits it."

"That would be to punish me for my philanthropy. No, Laurence, I am not jealous of this poor child, any more than I am jealous of every other woman to whom you speak. Jealousy is a chronic disease, you see, a kind of slow fever, and it has taken possession of me."

"Emily!"

"I think it is only another name for nerves. Do not look at me with such consternation.

What is it Mr. Kingsley says?—'Men must work, and women must weep.' They *must*, you see! It is the primary necessity of their existence; and if they have no real miseries, no husbands drifting over the harbour-bar to death, they invent sorrows, and weep over them."

To this kind of talk Mr. Desmond was tolerably well accustomed. It is the kind of talk which a man whom fate, or his own folly, has placed in a false position is sure to hear. One can fancy that Paris must have had rather a heavy time of it with Helen; and that when he went forth prancing like a war-horse to meet Menelaus, his gaiety may have in some degree arisen from his sense of escaping an impending curtain-lecture from the divine Tyndarid.

For some weeks after this conversation the editor of the *Areopagus* contrived to be more than usually occupied with the affairs of his paper. He sent Mrs. Jerningham tickets for concerts, and new books, and new music; but River Lawn he avoided. It was only upon a royal

command from the lady that he appeared there one afternoon, about six weeks after the funeral at Ventnor.

He found Lucy looking better; but Lucy's patroness was paler than usual, and was much disturbed by a dry, hacking cough, which somewhat alarmed Mr. Desmond.

Emily herself, however, made very light of the cough, nor did Mrs. Colton seem to consider it of any importance.

"It is only a winter cough," said Mrs. Jerningham; "I have suffered from the same kind of thing every winter, if, indeed, you can call it suffering. I suppose one must pay some penalty for living by the river. But I would not exchange my Thames for the gift of exemption from cough."

"It is quite a Morland cough," said Mrs. Colton; "my sister, Emily's mamma, had just the same kind of cough every winter."

Morland was the name of Mrs. Jerningham's maternal ancestry. Laurence bethought himself that Emily's mother had died at thirty

years of age, and he was not inclined to make light of the Morland cough.

"I wish you would come to town to-morrow and see Dr. Leonards," he said, by and by, when he and Emily were out of earshot of Mrs. Colton; "I don't see why you should go on coughing, or stay by the river, if Hampton disagrees with you."

"Dr. Leonards is the great man for the chest, is he not?" asked Mrs. Jerningham. "It would be really too absurd for me to see him. I have nothing whatever the matter with my chest, except a little pain occasionally, which Mr. Canterham, the Hampton surgeon, calls indigestion. Dr. Leonards would laugh at me."

"So much the better if he does," answered Laurence. "But I should very much like you to see him. You will do so, won't you, Emily, to oblige me?"

"To oblige you!" repeated Mrs. Jerningham, regarding him with a thoughtful gaze. "Why are you so anxious to consult the oracle?

Is it to resolve a doubt, or to confirm a hope?"

"Emily!"

"Oh, forgive me!" she cried, holding out her hand. "I am always thinking or saying something wicked. The Calvinists must surely be right; for I feel as if I had been created a vile creature, 'not born to be judged, but judged before I was born.' I will go to see your Dr. Leonards. I will do anything in the world to please you!"

"My dear Emily! to please me you have only to be happy yourself," he answered, with real affection.

"Ah! that is just the one thing that I cannot do. My life is all wrong somehow, and I cannot make it right. I have been trying to square the circle, ever since my marriage—with such unspeakable care and trouble—and the circle is no nearer being square. The impracticable, unmeasurable curves still remain, and are not to be squared by my power of calculation."

"Ah, Emily, if you had only trusted in me, and waited!"

"Ah, Laurence, if you had only spoken a little sooner!"

"I would not speak till I had secured a certain income. I had been taught to believe that no woman in your position could exist without a certain expenditure."

"Ah, that is the false philosophy of your modern school! A man tells himself that with such or such a woman he could live happily all the days of his life, but his friends warn him that the lady has been educated in a certain style, and must therefore be extravagant—so he keeps aloof from her; and some day, necessity, family ambition, weariness, pique, anger—Heaven knows what incomprehensible feminine impulse—tempts her to the utterance of the most fatal lie a woman's lips can shape. She marries a man she can never love, and she has her equipage, and her servants, and her house in Mayfair, and all the splendours *he* has been told she cannot live without: and she *does*

live—the life of the world, which is living death."

"For God's sake no more! You stab me to the heart."

He covered his face with his hands, and thought of what she had been saying to him. Yes, it was all true! His worldly wisdom had blighted that fair young life. Because he had been prudent; because he had taken counsel with his long-headed friends of the world, and had believed them when they said that the horrors of Pandemonium were less horrid than the dismal, muddling torments of a pinched household—because of these things Emily Jerningham's mind had been embittered, and her fair name sullied. And he could not undo the past. No. Strike Harold Jerningham from the roll of the living to-morrow, and leave those two free to wed, the haughty woman and the world-worn man who should stand side by side before God's altar, would have little more than their names in common with the lovers who walked arm-in-arm ten years ago in the garden at Passy.

"Yes, Emily, my sin is heavier than yours!" he said, presently. "With both, want of faith was the root of evil. If you had trusted in me, if I had trusted in Providence, all would have been different. But it is worse than useless to bewail those old mistakes. Let us make the best of what happiness remains to us. The pleasures of a real friendship, and one of those rarest of all alliances—a friendship between man and woman on terms of intellectual equality."

"There are wretched misogynists who say that kind of thing never has answered," said Mrs. Jerningham; "but we will try to prove them miserable maligners. And you will never regret the loss of a wife, or feel the want of a home, eh, Laurence?"

"Never, while you abstain from foolish jealousies," he answered boldly, and in all good faith.

Mrs. Jerningham drove into town next day, to see Dr. Leonards, in accordance with her promise to Laurence Desmond. She was accompanied by Mrs. Colton, who thought it

rather absurd that any one should take so much trouble about a Morland cough; but who was not ill-pleased to spend an hour in the delightful diversion of shopping, and to visit one of the winter exhibitions of pictures, while the horses took their rest and refreshment.

Dr. Leonards said very little, except that Mrs. Jerningham's chest was rather weak, and her nerves somewhat too highly strung. He asked her a few questions, wrote her a prescription, enjoined great care, and requested her to come to him again in a fortnight, or, better still, allow him to come to her.

"For now, really, you ought not to be out to-day," he said, glancing at a thermometer. "There is the slightest appearance of fever; and altogether, a drive from Hampton is about the worst possible thing for you. You ought to be sitting in a warm room at home."

"But look at my wraps," exclaimed Mrs. Jerningham.

"My dear lady, do you really imagine that your sables can protect you from the air you

breathe? An equable temperature of about sixty degrees is what you require; and here you are, on a bleak March day, riding thirty miles in a draughty carriage. I must beg you to be more careful."

Mrs. Colton on this assured Dr. Leonards that the cough was only a family cough; but the physician repeated his injunction.

"Prevention is better than cure," he said. "I can say nothing wiser than the old adage. Thanks. Good morning."

This was the patient's dismissal; the two ladies returned to their carriage.

"I hope Mr. Desmond will be satisfied," said Mrs. Jerningham; "and now let us go to see the French pictures."

At the French picture-gallery the ladies found Mr. Desmond, absorbed in the contemplation of a Meissonier.

"How good of you to be here!" exclaimed Mrs. Jerningham, brightening as she recognized him; "and so, for once in a way, you really have a leisure morning."

"I never have a leisure morning; at this very moment I ought to be 'sitting upon' a sensational historian, who fancies himself something between Thucydides and Macaulay. But you told me you were coming here, and so I postpone my sensational historian's annihilation until next week, and come to hear what Dr. Leonards says of your cough."

"Dr. Leonards says very little. I am to take care of myself. That is all."

"What does he mean by care?"

"Oh, I suppose I am to go on wearing furs, and that kind of thing. And I am to see all the pictures of the year; and you are to find plenty of leisure mornings; and so on."

In this careless manner did the patient dismiss the subject; nor could Laurence extort any further information from her. He attacked Mrs. Colton next, but could obtain little intelligence from that lady; and beyond this point he was powerless to proceed. He, Laurence Desmond, could not interrogate Dr. Leonards upon the health of Harold Jerningham's wife.

If she had been dangerously ill, interference was no privilege of his. And as her illness was of a very slight and unalarming character, he was fain to content himself with the fact that she had placed herself under the direction of an eminent physician.

That day was one of the few happy days that had been granted of late to Emily Jerningham. Mr. Desmond was even more devoted and anxious than he had shown himself for a long time. He accompanied the two ladies to picture-galleries, and silk-mercers, florists, and librarians, and did not leave them till he saw them safely bestowed in their carriage for the homeward journey, banked-in with parcels, and in an atmosphere stifling with exotics.

"What, in the name of the Sphinx, do women do with their parcels?" he asked himself, as he went back to his chambers. "Mrs. Jerningham comes to town at least once a fortnight, and she never goes back to Hampton without the same heterogeneous collection of paper packages. What can be the fate of that

mysterious mass? How does she make away with that mountain of frivolity, packed in whitey-brown paper? I never see any trace of the contents of those inexplicable packets. They never seem to develop into anything beyond their primeval form. To this day I know not what butterflies emerge from those paper chrysalids. And if she had been my wife, I must have found money to pay for all those frivolities. I must have battered my weary brains, and worked myself into a premature grave, to supply that perennial stream of parcels."

CHAPTER V.

LUCY'S FAREWELL TO THE STAGE.

For Lucy Alford life's outlook seemed very dreary after that chill day in February, when her father's bones were laid in their last resting-place. He had not been a good father—if measured by the ordinary standard of parental duty—but he had been a kind and gentle one, and his daughter lamented him with profound regret. He had allowed her to grow up very much as she pleased, taking no pains to educate her, but suffering her to pick up such stray crumbs of learning as fell from the table of the professional crammer; but by reason of this very neglect Tristram Alford had seemed to his child the very centre of love and indulgence. And, beyond this, he had believed in her, and admired her, and sustained her fainting spirit, when the theatrical horizon was darkest—when man-

agers were unkind, and sister-actresses malevolent —by such prophetic visions of future triumphs, and such glowing anticipations of coming happiness, as the man of sanguine temperament can always evolve from his inner consciousness and a gin-bottle. The poor child had found comfort and hope in those shadowy dreams, happily unconscious that her father's fancies were steeped in alcohol; and now that he was gone, the hopes and dreams seemed to have perished with him.

Thus it was that Lucy shrank from the idea of recommencing her theatrical labours as from a hopeless and a dreary prospect. Nor were her feelings on this subject uninfluenced by the sentiments of those two persons who were now her sole earthly friends. Laurence Desmond's shuddering horror of the "Cat's-meat Man," his furtive glance at the little red-satin boots in which she was to have danced the famous comic dance so much affected of late years, had been keenly noted, and remembered with cruel pain.

"How can he be so prejudiced against the profession?" she asked herself. And then she thought of Shakspeare, and of the Greek dramatists, whose every syllable and every comma had been so laboriously studied in the cramming season at Henley—and was slow to perceive that the more a man loves his Shakspeare and his Sophocles, the less indulgence is he likely to show to the "Cat's-meat Man."

Mrs. Jerningham contemplated the dramatic profession from the stand-point of a woman who had known poverty, but had never found herself in the streets of London without an escort, or her brougham, and who had spent her life in a circle where every woman's movements are regulated by severe and immutable laws.

"How will you pursue your professional career, now that your poor papa is gone, my dear?" she asked, kindly, when she came to discuss Miss Alford's future. "You cannot possibly travel about the country without a *chaperone*—some nice elderly person, who could

take great care of you, and whose respectability would be a kind of guarantee for your safety. It is quite out of the question that you should go from town to town *without* some such person."

Lucy blushed as she thought of the many damsels who did go from town to town unattended by this ideal representative of the proprieties; of Miss Gloucester, the walking-lady, who had walked in that ladylike capacity for the last fifteen years, and knew every town in the United Kingdom, and every *fit-up* or temporary temple of the drama in the British Islands—and who had supported her bed-ridden old mother in a comfortable lodging at Walworth, and had dressed herself with exquisite neatness, and preserved a reputation without spot or blemish, during the whole period, on a salary averaging twenty-five shillings per week. She thought, with a deeper blush, of the two ballet-dancers, Mademoiselle Pasdebasque and Miss May Zourka, who wandered over the face of the earth together, loud, and reckless, and

riotous as a couple of medical students, and who were dimly suspected of having given suppers—suppers of oysters, and pork-pies, and bottled-beer—to the officers of different garrisons, in the course of their wanderings. Of these, and of many other unprotected strollers —some bright, pure, gentle girls, of good lineage and careful education; many honest, hard-working, and self-sacrificing bread-winners; others painted and disreputable wanderers, who made their profession a means to their unholy ends—did Lucy think, as Mrs. Jerningham laid down the law about the respectable elderly *chaperone*.

"Do you know any one of unblemished respectability with whom you could travel?" Mrs. Jerningham asked, after a pause.

Miss Alford's mental gaze surveyed the ranks of her acquaintance, and the image of Mrs. M'Grudder arose before her, grim and terrible. Unblemished respectability was the M'Grudder's strong point. The fact that she was not an immoral person was a boast which she was apt

to reiterate at all times and seasons, appropriate or inappropriate; and her spotless fame had furnished her with many a Parthian shaft wherewith to wound helpless evil-doers of the Pasdebasque and May Zourka class, in that Eleusinian temple of theatrical life, the ladies' dressing-room. Abroad, guilty Pasdebasque has the best of it. She attends race-meetings in her carriage, and flaunts her silks and velvets before the awe-stricken eyes of the little country town. The garrison provides her with bouquets, and applauds her *entrées* with big noisy hands and a bass roar of welcome; while her benefits are favoured with a patronage seldom accorded to the benefits of innocence. But the Nemesis awaits her in the dressing-room. There the dread Furies avenge the wrongs of their weaker sisterhood, and retribution takes the awful voice of M'Grudder.

Ruthlessly does that lady perform her appointed duty. Loud are her expressions of wonder at the triumphs of *some* people; her bewilderment on perceiving the superb attire

which *some* people can procure out of a pittance of two guineas per week; her regret that on the occasion of *her* benefit the 17th Prancers had held themselves disdainfully aloof from the theatre, though her Lady Douglas *had* been compared to the performance of the same character by the great Siddons, and by judges *quite* as competent as the Prancers; and anon, in the next breath, her inconsistent avowal of thankfulness to Providence that her dress-circle had been empty, rather than filled as was the dress-circle of Mademoiselle Pasdebasque.

Lucy thought of Mrs. M'Grudder, who had at divers times taken upon herself the chaperonage of some timid young aspirant, and beneath whose ample wing, if rumour was to be trusted, the hapless neophyte had known a hard time. No, the dramatic profession at best had its trials; but life spent in the companionship of Mrs. M'Grudder would have been too bitter a martyrdom.

This was the beginning of the end of Miss Alford's professional career. She had pondered

much upon Laurence Desmond's evident dislike to her position, and had taken that dislike deeply to heart. The glamour was fast fading from the fairy dream of her childhood. She had played at Electra and Antigone—she had stood before her looking-glass, inspired, and radiant with passionate emotion, fancying herself Juliet or Pauline; and all her dreams had ended in—a page's dress, and a foolish comic song.

Mrs. Jerningham's influence speedily completed the work of disenchantment; and before Tristram Alford had been dead a month, his daughter had bidden farewell to the stage—in no brilliant apotheosis of bouquets and clamorous chorus of enraptured dramatic critics, eloquent as Pythoness on tripod, but in the sad silence of her own lonely chamber. She had said her doleful good-bye to the dreams of her youth, and had begun the practical career of a woman who stands quite alone in the world, and who has no hope save in her own patient industry.

"If I had any one to work for," she thought, sadly, "it would not seem hard to me. But to toil and drudge in order that I may prolong my lonely life, and with no other end or aim——!"

To Mrs. Jerningham she made no piteous confession of her own sadness. It was agreed between them that she was to be a governess. Mrs. Jerningham's influence would be invaluable in procuring her a situation; and all she had to do was to make herself mistress of the accomplishments which that lady assured her were indispensable. Some of these accomplishments she had already mastered; of others she had a superficial knowledge. Nothing was required but a little patient drudgery; two or three hours a day devoted to the piano, an hour or so to her German grammar. And in the evening she could read *I Promessi Sposi* to her kind patroness, by way of polishing her Italian.

"You shall stay with us till we have made you a perfect treasure in the way of governesses," Emily said, kindly, "and then Auntie and I

will take pains to get you a situation with nice people, who will give you seventy or eighty pounds a year, and with whom you may be as happy as the day is long; and I am sure that will be better than your dreadful country theatres.

Lucy assented to this proposition; but she thought, with a sigh, of Market Deeping, and her brief triumphs as Pauline. Yes, the dramatic profession was no doubt a hard one, but she had been happy at Market Deeping; and that one night of glory, when she had been called before the curtain after her performance of Pauline, had been a dazzling glimpse of brightness which shone back upon her through the mists of the past with supernal radiance. And instead of such bright brief successes, she was to teach those hideous German declensions, and read *I Promessi Sposi*, and superintend the performance of Cramer's Exercises, for ever and ever. For ever and ever! She was but just nineteen, and the long blank life before her looked like an eternity.

Her chief consolation during the patient, laborious days was the thought that Mr. Desmond would approve her efforts; her secondary motive was the desire to be duly grateful for Mrs. Jerningham's kindness. Nor were her days all drudgery. Her patroness was too kind to allow this. There were long drives through the bright pastoral landscape that lies around sleepy, river-side Hampton; a little, very little, quiet society; an occasional novel; and a rare—ah, too rare—visit from the editor of the *Areopagus*.

The relations existing between that gentleman and Mrs. Jerningham were quite beyond poor inexperienced Lucy's comprehension, and they formed the subject of her wondering meditations.

Between Mr. Desmond and Mrs. Jerningham there was no tie of kindred—*that* fact had long ago transpired; nor could Mr. Desmond be affianced to a lady whose husband's existence was a notorious fact. And yet Mr. Desmond was obviously the especial property, the moral

goods and chattels, of Mrs. Jerningham. Miss Alford knew something of Plato, but very little of that figment of the modern brain, entitled Platonic attachment. Friendship between these two persons would in no manner have surprised her; but, innocent as she was, her instinct told her that in this association there was something more than common friendship. If she had been blind to every subtle shade of tone and manner that prevailed between these two, she would have perceived the one fact, that Mr. Desmond's manner to herself in Emily's presence was not what it had been in the Islington lodging-house, where he had first come to her relief. The tender, half-fatherly familiarity was exchanged for a ceremonious courtesy that chilled her to the heart. Beyond a few kind but measured sentences of inquiry or solicitude when he first saw her, he scarcely addressed her at all during his visits of many hours. She sat far away from the chess-table or the reading-desk by which Emily's low easy-chair was placed, and the subdued murmur of

the two voices only came to her at intervals from the spot where Mrs. Jerningham and her guest conversed.

At dinner Mr. Desmond's talk was of that western London, which was stranger to her than Egypt or Babylon; the music which Mrs. Jerningham played after dinner was from modern operas, whose every note was familiar to those two, but of which she knew no more than the names. The books, the people, the places they talked of were all alike strange to her. She was with them, but not of them. The sense of her strangeness and loneliness weighed upon her like a physical oppression. Every day of Mr. Desmond's absence she found herself thinking of—nay, even hoping for—his coming; and when he came she was miserable, and felt her solitary, hopeless position more keenly than in his absence.

"Oh, why did I ever see him?" she asked herself. "I should have struggled on, somehow, at such places as Market Deeping, and might in the end have succeeded in my pro-

fession. And now I have given up all my hopes to please him—and he does not care! What can it matter to him whether I am an actress or a governess? I am nothing to *him*."

He does not care! This was the note, the dominant of all Miss Alford's sad reveries. She toiled on patiently, always anxious to please her patroness; but it seemed to her very hard that in gaining this new friend, she should have so utterly lost that old sweet friendship which had begun in the days when she wore holland pinafores, and fished for bream and barbel with a wretched worm impaled upon a crooked pin.

Once, when her sad thoughts were saddest, a faint sigh escaped her lips as she bent over her work, in her accustomed seat by one of the windows, remote from the spot affected by Mrs. Jerningham; and, looking up some minutes afterwards, she saw Laurence Desmond's eyes fixed upon her, with a look that penetrated her heart. Ah, what did it mean, that tender,

deeply-mournful look? This inexperienced girl dared not trust her own translation of its meaning. But that sad regard touched her heart with a new feeling.

"He thinks of me; he is sorry for me," she said to herself. More than this she dared not hope; but in her dreams that night, and in her thoughts and dreams of many days and nights to come, the look was destined to haunt her. In the next minute she heard Mrs. Jerningham announce her desire for a game of chess, with the tone of an extremely proper Cleopatra to an unmartial Antony.

The weeks and months went by, and Mrs. Jerningham was still a kind and hospitable friend to the helpless girl whom Mr. Desmond had cast upon her compassion.

"I am very glad you introduced her to me," Emily said sometimes to the editor of the *Areopagus*. "She is really a dear little thing; and I am growing quite attached to her."

"Yes, she is a good little girl," replied Mr. Desmond, in a careless tone.

"And as to jealousy," resumed Emily, "of course that is quite out of the question with such a dear, harmless little creature."

"Of course."

And then Mrs. Jerningham looked at Mr Desmond, and Mr. Desmond looked at Mrs. Jerningham, with the air of accomplished, swordsmen on guard.

Was Mrs. Jerningham jealous of this "dear, harmless little creature"? She watched Miss Lucy very closely when Laurence was present, and had a sharp eye for Laurence when he gave Miss Lucy good-day; but if she had been jealous, she would scarcely have kept Lucy at the villa, where Laurence saw her very often; on the other hand, if Lucy had not been at the villa, Laurence might have seen her even more often, and Mrs. Jerningham could not have been present at their meetings; so there may have been some alloy of self-interest mingled with the pure gold of womanly kindness.

The spring ripened into early summer, and the Hampton villa looked its brightest; but

neither spring nor summer saw the end of Emily Jerningham's family cough. She insisted upon making light of the matter, and as, unhappily, those about her were inexperienced in illness, the slight but perpetual cough gave little uneasiness. Before Laurence she made a point of appearing at her best. Excitement gave colour to her cheeks and light to her eyes. The outline of her patrician face was little impaired by some loss of roundness, and her elegant demi-toilettes concealed the fact that she was growing alarmingly thin. Her maid alone knew the extent of the change, which she and the housekeeper discussed, with much solemn foreboding of coming ill.

"I had to line the sleeves of her last dress with wadding," said the abigail; "such a beautiful arm she had, too, when I first came to her; but she's been going off gradual-like for the last three years, poor thing! and as to talking to her about her 'ealth, it would be as much as my place is worth, for a prouder lady, nor a more reserved in her ways, I never lived

with. You might as well stand behind a statue, and brush *its* hair, till you're ready to drop, for anything like conversation you can get out of *her* ; and when I think of my last lady—which was a countess, as you know, Wilcox, and the things *she'd* tell me, and the way she loved a bit of gossip—it turns my blood to ice like to wait upon Mrs. Jerningham. And yet as generous a lady as ever I served ; and as kind and civil-spoken, in her own cold way."

Mrs. Jerningham paid several visits to Dr. Leonards ; but as she obstinately or apathetically ignored that distinguished physician's counsels, she was no better for those drives to Great George Street.

Laurence questioned her closely as to these interviews, and would fain have questioned Dr. Leonards himself, had his position authorized him to do so.

Lucy, who knew absolutely nothing of illness, believed her kind patroness's cough to be the merest nervous irritation of the throat ; nor

was Mrs. Colton in any manner alarmed. No one but Mrs. Jerningham herself knew of her feverish nights, and daily hours of suffering and languor, endured in the solitude of her pretty morning-room. Even the patient herself had no apprehension of danger. The languor had crept upon her by such slow degrees, the fever had so long been a chronic disorder.

"If I were happy, I should soon be well, I dare say," she said to herself; "the fever and the weakness are of the mind rather than the body."

In the first week of summer Mr. Desmond gave himself a brief respite from the cares of the *Areopagus*, and secured bachelor lodgings at Sunbury, where he kept his boat, and whence he rowed to and from River Lawn.

"And this week you are really going to give to me?" said Mrs. Jerningham.

"To you and to Father Thames. I hope you are as fond of the river as you were last summer."

"Oh yes. The river has been my com-

panion upon many a lonely summer day. I have reason to be fond of the river."

She glanced with something of sadness to her favourite seat under the drooping boughs of a Spanish chestnut. Her summer days had been very lonely, lacking all those elements which make the lives of women sweet and happy. For her had been no murmur of children's voices, no pleasant cares of household, no daily expectation of a husband's return from club or senate, office or counting-house; no weekly round of visits among the poor; no sense of duty done; only a dull, listless blank, and the last new novel, and the last new colour in *gros de Lyons*, and the last new monster in scentless, gaudy horticulture, a chocolate-coloured calceolaria, a black dahlia, a sea-green camellia japonica.

"You are going to give me the whole week," she said. "Oh, Laurence, I will try to be happy!"

She said this with unwonted earnestness, and with eyes that were dim with unshed tears.

And she kept her word. She did honestly try to be happy, and she succeeded in being—gay. If the gaiety were somewhat feverish, if her harmonious laugh bordered on that laughter whereof Solomon said "it was mad," she did for the moment contrive to escape thought. This was something, for of late, thought had been only another name for care.

Mr. Desmond had rowed stroke in the University Eight, and shared the Oxonian fallacy that to scull from ten to twenty miles under a broiling sun is the intellectual man's best repose. He rested his brain from the labours of the *Areopagus*, and spent his days in pulling a roomy wherry to and fro between Hampton and Maidenhead, with Mrs. Jerningham and Lucy Alford for his passengers, and a dainty little hamper of luncheon for his cargo.

The weather was lovely. The landscape through which the river winds between Hampton and Chertsey, between Chertsey and Maidenhead, is a kind of terrestrial paradise, and a paradise peopled with classic shades; and

all along those pastoral, villa-dotted banks, nestled little villages and trimly-furnished inns, within whose hospitable shade the wanderers might repose, while the smart, maple-painted boat bobbed up and down at anchor in the sun. These peaceful rovers kept no count of the hours. They left River Lawn at early morning, lunched among the reedy shores below Chertsey, took their five-o'clock tea at Staines, and went home with the tide to a compound collation, which combined the elements of dinner, tea, and supper.

Mrs. Colton was but too glad to forego the delights of these water-parties in favour of Lucy; nor was Laurence sorry to resign a passenger who weighed some twelve or thirteen stone, who at every lurch of the boat entertained fears of drowning; to whom every weir seemed perilous as Niagara, and every lock a descent into Hades; and whose shawls and wraps, and carriage-rugs and foot-muffs, were insufferable to behold under the summer sun.

To Lucy, the delight of these excursions

was a single ineffable pleasure. She knew that this bright, brief existence in *his* company was to occur once in her life, and once only. Again and again she told herself this; but she could not help being dangerously happy. The river, the sunshine, the landscape, the perfumed air that crept over banks of wild-thyme,—for, thank Heaven, in spite of the builder, the wild-thyme does still blow on banks we know, not twenty miles from London,—all these things of themselves would have made her happy; but to these things Laurence Desmond's presence, his low, kind voice, his ever-thoughtful care, lent a new sweetness.

In plain truth, this penniless orphan-girl had most innocently and unconsciously fallen in love—or learned to love the man who had befriended her. Of that kindly, compassionate assistance which Mr. Desmond had given in all singleness of heart, *this* was the fatal fruit. From the first he had felt a vague consciousness that danger might lurk in this association; but the full extent of that peril he had

never foreseen. It was danger to himself he had dreaded. The girl's helplessness had touched him, her gratitude had melted him, her pretty, innocent, almost reverential looks and tones had flattered him.

He knew now that the hazard of his own feelings had been less than the peril of hers. By signs and tokens, too subtle and too delicate for translation into words, the fatal secret had been revealed to him. He knew that he was beloved; that this affectionate, innocent heart was his; that this fresh young life might be taken into his keeping to-morrow, to brighten and bless his own until the end of his earthly pilgrimage. Yes; this dear little creature, with her soft, winning ways, and dove-like eyes, he might have claimed for his wife to-morrow: if he had been free. But on him there was a tie more binding than marriage, a chain that no divorce could break —the bondage of his honour. As Lancelot sadly bade farewell to the lily maid of Astolat, so Laurence, in the silence of his heart, put

away from him the dream and the hope that he would fain have cherished.

And all the time he thought of his bondage, the oars dipped gaily into the water, and the editor and Mrs. Jerningham talked of literature and art, and fashion and horticulture; and Lucy was satisfied with the delight of hearing that one dear voice which made the most commonplace conversation a kind of poetry. There are no limits to the sentimentality of inexperienced girlhood. Young ladies in society had calculated Mr. Desmond's income to a sixpence, and had assessed all the advantages of his position, his chances of a seat in Parliament by and by, with every remote contingency of his career. But if he had indeed been Lancelot, and herself Elaine the fair, Lucy Alford could scarcely have regarded him with more reverent affection. And all this he had won for himself by a little Christianlike compassion, and an expenditure of something under fifty pounds.

CHAPTER VI.

"COULD LOVE PART THUS?"

THE happy week went by, and at the close of it came the end of the world, as it seemed to Lucy Alford.

"Good news, Lucy!" Mrs. Jerningham said, one morning, as she opened her letters at the breakfast-table; "good news for you."

"For *me*," faltered Miss Alford, blushing; "what good news can there be for me?"

What indeed? Was not Laurence Desmond's holiday to end to-morrow? This afternoon they were to have their last row on the Thames.

"Yes, Lucy. You remember what I told you about Mrs. Fitzpatrick, that delightful person in Ireland. I wrote to her a few days ago, you know, telling her of my plans for you,—for she is just one of those good, motherly creatures who are always ready to help one,—and it hap-

pens most fortunately that she can take you herself. Her own governess—a young person who had been with her five years—has lately married, and she has tried in vain to find any one she likes. You are to go to her at once, dear, with a salary of sixty pounds. The situation will be a delightful one, you will be quite one of the family, and they live in a noble old stone house, in a great wilderness of a park, only fifteen miles from Limerick."

"Only fifteen miles from Limerick." If the noble old stone house had been fifteen miles from Memphis, or fifteen miles from Timbuctoo, the name of the locality could scarcely have conjured up more dreary ideas in the mind of Lucy Alford. She involuntarily made a rough calculation of the mileage between Limerick and Mr. Desmond's chambers. *Him* she could never hope to see again, if she went to those unknown wilds of Ireland. And yet what did it matter? A world seemed to divide them, as it was. Sitting in the same boat with him, the abyss that yawned between them was

profound and immeasurable as eternity. At Limerick or at Hampton it must be all the same. He was nothing to her at Hampton; at Limerick he could be no less than nothing. Something in her face, as she mused thus, told Mrs. Jerningham that the delight afforded by these tidings was not altogether unalloyed.

"I dare say the notion of such a journey alarms you," said Emily, kindly; "but I will see that all is arranged for your comfort. And I am sure you will be happy at Shannondale Park. I could not have wished you better fortune than such a home."

No: what could fortune give her brighter than this? A pleasant home and a kind mistress. She felt like some poor little slave sold to a new master, to be sent to a strange country. She tried with a great effort to express some sense of pleasure and thankfulness, but she could not. The words choked her. Happy, in barbarous wastes of unknown Hibernia, while *he* lived his own life in London, serenely forgetful of her wretched existence!

"Oh, how ungrateful I am!" she said to herself, while Mrs. Jerningham watched her sharply, and guessed what thoughts were working in that sorely troubled brain.

"Perhaps a situation nearer London would have suited you better, Miss Alford," Emily remarked, with biting acrimony; "where your *old friends* could have called upon you from time to time."

Lucy flushed burning red, and anon burst into tears.

"I have no friend in the world but you," she said, piteously. "I know it is wicked of me not to be pleased with such good fortune, and I—am—truly—ger—ger—grateful to you, dear Mrs. Jerningham; but Ireland seems so *very* far away."

The piteous look subdued Emily's sternness. She took the girl's hand in her own tenderly.

"Yes, it *seems* far away," she said, cheerfully; "but I know you will be happy there. You cannot imagine anything more beautiful than the river Shannon."

Lucy thought of Father Thames and his dipping willows, and *his* grave face, sadly regardful of her in the pauses of his talk. She thought of these things, and shook her head. Ah, no, it was impossible; for *her*, Shannon could never be what Thames had been. Mrs. Jerningham comforted her in a grand, patronizing manner, and promised her unbounded happiness—on the banks of the Shannon.

"You do not know what the Irish are," she exclaimed; "so kind, so hearty, so genial. With them a governess is received as one of the family. The children love her, and cling to her as if she were an elder sister. And the Fitzpatricks are of the *vieille roche*, you know; you will find no parvenu gentility there."

Yes, the picture was a fair one; but, for lack of one feature, it seemed cold and dreary to Lucy Alford. She managed, however, to appear contented, and thanked Mrs. Jerningham prettily for the kindness which had procured her this distant home. After this, Emily went out alone to her garden and hot-houses, to inspect

the latest ugliness in calceolarias; and Mrs. Colton held her morning conference with the housekeeper, and received a solemn embassy from the kitchen-garden and forcing-houses. Lucy sat listlessly in the drawing-room, meditating upon the new estate of life to which it had pleased Mrs. Jerningham, under Providence, to call her; while Mrs. Jerningham went to see the new calceolaria, and to reflect at ease upon her late interview with Lucy.

"There isn't one of 'em out as deep a colour as this here, mum," said the gardener; "and if I can get the slips to strike—as I believe I shall—we shall have a rare show of 'em."

"Poor little thing, how she loves him!" thought Mrs. Jerningham. "But in a new country, among new faces, she will soon forget all that."

"They strikes a deep root, you see, mum, when they do strike—these young plants. They send their suckers down into the earth, and you'd find it hard work to uproot 'em."

"A girl of that age is always falling in

love," continued Mrs. Jerningham. "It's a mere overflow of juvenile sentimentality, and never lasts very long."

And then, having stared at the flowers in the hothouse with absent, unseeing eyes, she would fain have departed; but the gardener stopped her with a request for permission to order more manure.

"We shall want a few loads more, mum," he said, in his most insinuating tone; "I don't like to be allus askin'—which I know it *do* look like that—but I know as you wish a show made with these here calceolaries; and these young plants require a deal o' manure. And then there's the melons, mum; there ain't a plant going like melons for sucking the goodness out of manure—they're a regular greedy lot, melons—as you may say, mum; and there ain't no satisfyin' 'em. But, you see, I turns it all into the ground afterwards, mum, and you gets the good out of it next year, in your sea-kale."

Mrs. Jerningham gave her consent for the ordering of the manure, though she had a dim

idea that in the matter of manure she was marked as the victim of extortion. She looked about her as she went slowly back to her favourite green walk by the river. She looked at the forcing-pits and hot-houses, the perfectly trained wall-fruit—which might have shown beside the symmetrical pears and plum-trees of Frogmore—and she reflected how much they had cost, and how little happiness they had given her.

"One cannot force happiness," she said to herself. "Or if one does, it is like the peaches we ripen in February—almost flavourless."

She went down to the green, sheltered walk, where the low plashing murmur of the river seldom failed to tranquillize her spirits. Here she could think quietly of the one subject which was all-important to her anxious mind. That Lucy Alford loved Laurence Desmond she was fully assured: *that* point she had long settled for herself. The one portentous question yet unanswered was, whether Laurence loved Lucy. Mrs. Jerningham had watched the two closely,

and she suspected Laurence with a direful suspicion, but she could not be sure that he had merited her doubts.

"If I thought that he loved her, I would end this miserable farce at once," she said to herself, "and set him free. How many times I have offered him his freedom! And he has refused it, and assured me—in his cold, measured, *friendly* way—of his unchanging constancy. Hypocrite!" she muttered, between her clenched teeth.

And then there came upon her an awful yearning for some death-dealing weapon, with which, at one fell swoop, she might annihilate the man she loved.

"Oh, how dearly I loved him," she thought; "how dearly I loved him! How I used to yearn for his coming; how willingly I would have endured poverty and trouble for his sake —in those old happy days when I was free to be his wife! And he waited till his income should be large enough for a suitable establishment, and let another man marry me!"

Did Laurence love Lucy? That was the question which Mrs. Jerningham would fain have solved. But to send Lucy to Ireland was scarcely the way to arrive at a solution. It was rather like begging the question.

"She will tell him she is going, directly she sees him," said Mrs. Jerningham; "and he must be a consummate hypocrite if his manner then does not betray him."

Laurence was expected at noon that day—in half an hour. He was to come from Sunbury in his boat, to take the two ladies on their last excursion. Emily determined upon lying in wait for him, in order to be present at his meeting with Miss Alford.

"I must see the first effect of the news," she thought.

She paced slowly up and down the walk. As twelve o'clock struck from Hampton church, the boat's keel ground against the iron steps. Laurence tied her to the landing-stage, and came bounding on to the green walk, at the extreme end of which Mrs. Jerningham stood

watching him. He did not glance in her direction, but walked across the lawn to the drawing-room, where he was accustomed to find the mistress of the house, and went in through a fernery.

Emily followed swiftly. She was so eager to perceive the effect of those tidings which must needs be so important to Laurence, if he were indeed the traitor she half-believed him to be. At the glass-door between the fernery and the drawing-room she stopped. She was too late. The news had been told already. For one moment she deliberated, and in the next, as far as feminine honour goes, was lost. Laurence was speaking. She did not want to interrupt him. She wanted to hear what he said; so she drew back a little, behind the shelter of a gigantic Australian fern, and watched him, and heard him, from that convenient covert.

"To Ireland?" he said, gravely; "and do you like going to Ireland, Miss Alford?"

This was very proper; this was as it should be, thought Mrs. Jerningham,—a cold, mea-

sured, guardian-like tone, expressive of a gentleman-like and Christian-like concern in the young lady's welfare; no more. Emily breathed more freely.

"Ye—yes," faltered Lucy; "I—I—I am very grateful to Mrs. Jerningham for her kindness in procuring me such a happy home; only —only I——"

"Only what, Lucy?"

Good heavens! what a sudden change of tone! No longer measured and gentleman-like, but full of a tender eagerness—a fond concern, that went through Mrs. Jerningham's heart like a dagger.

"Only I—oh, it is very wicked of me to be discontented—only—Ireland is so very, very far away from all the people I ever knew; and every friend—and—from you!"

And here she broke down, as she had broken down upon a previous occasion, and burst into tears.

In the next moment she was clasped in Laurence Desmond's arms. The Australian fern

was shaken as by a sudden tempest—ah, what a tempest of passion, and grief, and jealousy, and despair raged in the heart of her whose trembling caused those leaves to shake!

"Lucy!" cried Laurence, passionately, "you must not—you must not! I cannot see you cry. It is not the first time. Once before you tortured me like this; and I held my tongue. I *could* keep silence then; but I can't to-day. I did not love you then as I do now—my pet, my dear love. Send you to Ireland! Oh, how cruel!—my tender one alone among strangers! My dearest, for months I have held myself aloof from you; I have forbidden my eyes to look at you; and now, after all my struggles, after all my victories, I break down at last. I love you—I love you!"

He kissed her—the fair young brow, the eyelids wet with tears. Mrs. Jerningham heard that unmistakeable sound, as of song-birds in an aviary; and if a wish could kill, there would have been a swift and sudden foreclosure of two fair lives.

"*You*—you love me!" faltered Lucy in a whisper.

It was too sweet. Ah, yes; a brief delicious dream, no doubt, thought Miss Alford.

"Yes, dear, with all my heart I love you," answered Laurence Desmond, putting her suddenly away from him, with a solemn gesture, symbolical of eternal divorcement. "I love you, my dearest and best; but you and I can never be more to each other than we have been —never again so much; for at least we have been together—and for me even *that* happiness must never be again."

Lucy looked at him wonderingly, but she did not speak. She was overcome by the one stupendous fact of Laurence Desmond's confession. He loved her! After this the deluge. If the peaceful rippling river had arisen, mighty as old Nile, to sweep all the villas of Hampton to the distant sea, she would have submitted to the swift destruction, and have deemed herself sufficiently blest in having lived to hear what she had heard. This is how girlhood

loves. Unhappily, or it may be happily, such love as this—simple, single, passionate as its sister poetry—perishes with girlhood. The woman's Love is a compound of many passions, claims cousinship with Pride and Self-esteem, and owns an ugly half-sister called, by her friends, Prudence, by her foes, Calculation.

"My dear, I love you," continued Laurence with gentle gravity, and with the air of a man who has resolved on a full confession. "When first your father called me to your aid, I came, pleased at the idea of serving an old friend, but with the vaguest possible recollection of the pretty little girl I had seen running after butterflies at Henley. I came, and I found my little butterfly-huntress transformed into a fair and loving creature, whose unselfish nature was revealed in every look and thought. For a long time I had no thought, no consciousness of such a thought, except the honest desire to help you, to the best of my power, in the difficult career you had chosen for yourself. How shall I tell you at what moment this friendly

interest grew into a warmer feeling, when I cannot explain the change to myself? I only know that I love you; and that if I were free, as I am not, I should sigh for no sweeter home than one to which you would welcome me."

For a few moments he paused, looking fondly at the sweet blushing face, downcast eyelids heavy with tears, and then went on steadily:

"I am not free, Lucy; I am bound hand and foot by the fetters I forged for myself some years ago; and I think, as I have told you one-half of the truth, it will be wisest to tell you the other half. Ten years ago I very dearly loved a young lady, as beautiful, as amiable as yourself, like yourself the only daughter of a gentleman in reduced circumstances, but not subjected to the trials which you have borne so nobly. I loved her dearly and truly; but I was a man of the world, a haunter of clubs, a little sceptical on the subject of feminine fortitude and feminine reasonableness; and I told myself that, in order to insure this young lady's happiness and my own, I must first

secure an income which would enable us to be dwellers within the pale of society. I had been taught that, on the outermost side of that impalpable, conventional boundary, domestic happiness for people of gentle rearing was impossible. It was not enough that I loved her; it was not enough that I believed myself beloved; something more than this was necessary—a brougham, a house in that border-land of Pimlico which courtesy can call Belgravia, and a fair allowance for the expenses of my wife's toilette. Ah, Lucy, you can never imagine what ghostly shadows of flounced petticoats and voluminous silken trains arose between me and the image of the girl I loved, and waved me back, and made a phantasmal barrier between us! If you marry her, said Prudence, you must pay for those. I *will* marry her, I answered, when I feel myself strong enough to cope with her milliner's bill." He laughed a short bitter laugh.

"Lucy," he cried, "I think if I had not loved you for yourself, I should have loved you

for your simple dresses. I have been so suffocated in our modern atmosphere of luxury—stifled with the odour of Ess. Bouquet, snowed-up in silks and laces, and soft-scented plumes, and the faint perfume of sandal-wood fans, and the crush and crowd of modern fashion—that to find a woman who could be pretty without the aid of Truefitt, and could charm without the art of Descou, was piquant as a discovery; but I will not stop to speak of these things. While I waited, the woman whom I dearly loved married another man, older by many years than herself, in every way unsuited to her. Within a year of her marriage I met her unexpectedly, and her face told me that I was not quite forgotten. After that meeting, fate threw us much together; and oh, Lucy, now I come to the hard part of my confession! Her husband trusted me, and I wronged him; by no act which the world calls guilt, but by a sentimental flirtation, licensed by the world so long as it is unprotested against by the husband. It was pleasant to us to meet, and we

met; it was pleasant to her to read the books I recommended, to sing the songs I chose for her. Among the costlier gifts of her husband, her morning-room was sometimes adorned with a rustic basket of hothouse flowers from me. At the Opera, in picture-galleries, in her own house, we met, week after week, month after month. No friendship was ever more intellectual; nothing within the meaning of the word flirtation was ever less guilty. By and by I wrote to her—letters about art, about books, about music, about the gossip of the world in which we lived, with here and there a half-expressed regret for my own broken life or her uncongenial marriage. Love-letters in the common sense of the word they were not; but letters so long and so frequent might, if received by her at her own house, have attracted attention; so they were directed to a neighbouring post-office. *That*, Lucy, was our worst guilt; and it wrecked us. One day the letters were found, and the husband tacitly signed his wife's condemnation without having troubled

himself so much as to read the evidence against her. From that hour my life was devoted to the woman who had suffered by my selfishness and folly; from that hour to this we have been friends in the fullest sense of the word, and friends only. If ever the day of her freedom comes, I shall claim her as my wife; if it should never come, I shall go to my grave unmarried. And now, Lucy, you know all; you know that I love you; and you know why I have fought a hard fight against my love, and am angry with myself for being betrayed into this confession."

"It was all my fault," sobbed Lucy, who was ever ready to cry *mea culpa;* "I had no right to tell you I was sorry to go to Ireland. But oh, Mr. Desmond, forget that you have ever spoken to me, and be true to the lady you loved so dearly, long ago! If it is hard for me to lose you, it would be harder for her. I will go to Ireland; I will try to do my duty; I will try to be happy. You have been so kind to me—and—Mrs. Jerningham—has been so kind too;

I am grateful to you both ; and when I am far away, I shall think of you both with love and gratitude, and pray for your happiness every day of my life."

She had been quick to identify that lady whom Laurence had so carefully avoided naming ; she understood now, for the first time, the nature of the tie that bound him to Mrs. Jerningham.

" I am to go to Ireland in a very few days," she said, after a brief pause, during which Laurence Desmond sat motionless, his face hidden by his hand ; " I will say good-bye at once. I shall see you again, of course—but not alone. Good-bye—and thank you a thousand, thousand times for all your goodness to me and to my father."

She held out her hands, but he did not see them.

" Good-bye ! God bless you, darling ! " he said, in a broken voice, and in the next moment Lucy Alford left the room.

Mr. Desmond sighed, a heavy sigh ; and

when he removed his hand from before his face, that pale watcher behind the fern saw that his cheeks were wet with tears. For some minutes—slow, painful minutes to the watcher—he sat meditating gloomily; and then he too departed, with a listless step, by one of the windows opening on the lawn.

"O God!" thought the watcher, who had sunk back helpless, motionless, against the angle of the wall, "am *I* the only wretch upon earth? These two think it very little to sacrifice themselves for me; and yet I cannot let him go—I cannot let him go."

She came out from her lurking-place into the drawing-room, and seated herself by the table at which Laurence had been sitting; and here she sat with hands clasped before her face, thinking of what she had heard. Unspeakable had been the pain of that revelation; but the blow had not been unexpected. For some time she had suspected Laurence Desmond's regard for Lucy; for a very long time she had perceived the decline of his affection for herself.

"It is my own fault," she thought; "I harassed and worried him with my wicked jealousy. I made myself a perpetual care and trouble to him: can I wonder that I lost his love? Oh, if I could learn to be generous, if I could be only reasonable and just, if I could let him go! But I cannot, I cannot!"

No, indeed: she had made Laurence Desmond a part of herself, the very first principle of her existence; and to resign her hold upon him was to make an end of the sole aim and object of her life. For him she had lived, and for none other. The two commandments of the Gospel were to her much less than this man. Her love for her God began and ended with a tolerably punctual attendance at the parish church, and a half-mechanical utterance of the responses to the orthodox family prayers which Mrs. Colton read every morning and vening to the little household of River Lawn. Her love for her neighbour was summed-up in a careless compliance with any parochial demand on her purse. All the rest was Laurence

Desmond. And now conscience told her she must give him up. She sat thinking, with tearless eyes and a pale, still face, until the subject of her thoughts came to the open window, and told her that the boat was ready.

CHAPTER VII.

A SUMMER STORM.

Mrs. Colton entered the drawing-room by the door as Laurence Desmond came in by the window. "I have given you the sparkling Rüdesheimer instead of champagne, Mr. Desmond," she said, cheerily: "Donner has put it in a basket of rough ice; and Vokes has brought me in the finest peaches I have seen this year, Emily. He is quite proud of them."

After this came Lucy, pale and grave, but looking the picture of innocence and prettiness, in her white dress, and little sailor hat with ribbon of Oxford blue.

"Not dressed, Emily!" exclaimed Laurence, as he shook hands with Mrs. Jerningham.

The exclamation was purely mechanical. His

mind must indeed have been pre-occupied, or he would have noticed the icy coldness of the hand that lay so listlessly in his own.

"I have only my hat to put on. Wilson has seen to the shawls and cloaks, no doubt. I am quite ready."

Mrs. Jerningham took her hat from the sofa, where she had thrown it an hour before; a very archetype of hats, bordered with the lustrous plumage of a peacock's breast. Of these glories she had tasted to satiety; all the bliss that millinery can give to the heart of woman had been hers. But there comes a time when even these things seem vanity. To-day the peacock's plumage might have been dust and ashes, for any pleasure it afforded her.

They went out to the boat. The day was warm to oppressiveness, and Mrs. Jerningham's attire of the thinnest.

"I hope you have plenty of wraps," said Laurence; "there's rather an ugly cloud to windward."

"Oh yes; Wilson always gives us an infinity

of that kind of thing," Mrs. Jerningham answered, glancing at the bottom of the boat, where lay a heap of shawls and cloaks of the burnous order, just a little less gauzy in texture than the dresses of the two ladies.

"I really am almost afraid of the day," muttered Lawrence, looking to the south-west, where a stormy darkness brooded over the landscape.

"I am not afraid," replied Emily; "it is to be our last day, remember, Laurence. Let us have our last day together."

Something in her tone startled and touched him. He looked at her earnestly, but the proud face gave no sign.

"It shall be as you please," he said; "but I must not forget that you are not out of the hands of Dr. Leonards, and you have told me he enjoined you to be careful."

"Oh yes; a physician always says that when he can find nothing else to say."

There was a little more discussion, and presently the boat shot away, swift as a dart, with

the strong sweep of the sculls. They were to land at Chertsey, picnic at St. Ann's Hill, and come home to Hampton in the evening. Laurence Desmond had the proprietorial mandate in his pocket, that for him and his friends the gates of St. Ann's should be opened.

Only a few big, splashing drops of rain overtook them between Hampton and Chertsey, and when they landed, the stormy darkness seemed to have vanished from the south-western horizon. Mr. Desmond had made all his arrangements; a fly was in waiting, and in half an hour the little party were wandering in the groves which have been sanctified to history by the fame of Fox.

The picnic was to all appearance a success. The almost feverish gaiety which had distinguished Emily Jerningham of late was especially noticeable in her manner to-day. *Carpe diem* was the philosophy which sustained her in this bitter crisis. This last day would she snatch. It was her festive supper on the eve of execution. Like that bright band whose

laughter echoed in Trophonian caves of grim Bastille, before the dawn that was to witness their slaughter, did Emily Jerningham pour out the sparkling vintage of the Rhineland as a libation upon that altar where she was so soon to sacrifice her selfish love.

The western sky was dark and louring when the revellers left the groves of St. Ann, and were driven back to the boat-builder's yard, where they had landed.

"I really think it might be better to go back by road," Laurence said, doubtfully, as he looked at the cloudy horizon. Six o'clock chimed from the tower of Chertsey Church as he spoke. "It will be nearly nine o'clock before I can get you home, you see," he added; "and if there should be rain——"

"We will endure it without a murmur," interposed Emily. "I am bent on going back by water."

"Would Dr. Leonards approve?"

"I will not hold my life on such terms as Dr. Leonards would dictate. We shall have moon-

light before we reach Hampton. Come, Laurence, I am quite ready."

Mr. Desmond submitted, and placed his fair companions in the boat with all due care. Then, after the preliminary pushing-off, the oars dipped softly in the water, and the boat sped homewards.

Mrs. Jerningham's gaiety left her with a strange abruptness. She leant back against the cushioned rail of the boat, silent and thoughtful, and with fixed, dreamy eyes.

"You are tired, I fear," Laurence remarked by and by, wondering at her silence.

"Yes; I am a little tired."

It would seem as if Lucy too were tired, for she also was silent, and sat watching the changing landscape with a thoughtful gaze. But upon her silence Laurence Desmond made no remark. She had, indeed, been silent and thoughtful all the day, and yet not unhappy. Unhappy!—he loved her! She had been telling herself that fact over and over again, with ever-delightful iteration. He loved her! To know

that it was so constituted an all-sufficient happiness.

The water-journey with one pair of sculls between Chertsey and Hampton is a long one, and many are the locks which arrest the swift progress of the voyager, and often echoes the cry of "Lo-o-óck!" over the quiet waters; but so bright and changing is the landscape, so soothing the influence of the atmosphere, that the voyager must be dull indeed who finds the way too long.

The changing banks shifted past Mrs. Jerningham like pictures in a dream. A profound silence had fallen upon the boat. The rower dipped his oars with a measured mechanical motion, and his grave face might have been the countenance of Charon himself, conveying a boatload of shadows to the Rhadamanthine shore. To Emily it seemed as if they were indeed voyagers on some mystic, symbolical river, rather than on the friendly breast of Thames. The end of her life had come. What had she to do but die? All that she held dear—the one sustain-

ing influence of her weak soul, the very keystone of the edifice of her life—this she was to lose. And what then?

Beyond this point she could not look. That a dismal duty, a bitter sacrificial act, must be performed by her, she knew. But that by the doing of that act she might possibly attain peace, consolation, release from a long and harassing bondage, she could not foresee.

"I will give him up," she said to herself; "soon—to-night. It is like the bitter medicine they made me take sometimes when I was a child. I cannot take it too soon."

And then she looked at Lucy, and her lip curled ever so little as she scrutinized the fair but not altogether perfect face.

She measured her charms against those of her happier rival, and told herself that all the advantage was on her own side. And yet, and yet—this fair-faced girl was dearer to him, by an infinite degree, than she who had loved him so many years.

While silence still held the voyagers as by a

spell, the rain came splashing heavily down, and the perils of the journey began. They had not yet reached Sunbury, and some miles of winding water lay between them and Hampton.

"I am afraid we are in for it," Laurence said. "We had better land at Sunbury, and get back in a fly."

Mrs. Jerningham was opposed to this. She declared that she had not the slightest objection to the rain; she was wrapped up to an absurd degree; and she drew her gauzy burnous round her in evidence of the fact, while Lucy adjusted a second cloak of thin scarlet fabric over the gauzy white burnous. Laurence, however, insisted on landing, and did his utmost to procure a vehicle; while the two ladies shivered in a chilly inn-parlour, their garments already damp with the heavy rain. He came back to them in despair. No fly was to be had at Sunbury for love or money. There was a Volunteer ball at Chertsey that very evening, and every vehicle was engaged.

"I had much rather go back in the boat," said Emily.

"But the doctor said you were to be so careful," suggested Lucy.

"I do not believe in the doctor. Come, Laurence, it is better to encounter another shower than to wait shivering here for unattainable flies."

To this Mr. Desmond unwillingly assented. There was a pause in the summer storm—a faint glimmer of watery sunlight low in the cloudy west. The boat seemed the only possible means of getting home.

"If you would stay here all night," he suggested, "it would be better than running any risk."

"I could not exist a night in a strange hotel," replied Mrs. Jerningham, glancing round the bare, bleak-looking room, with a shudder. "Please take us home, Mr. Desmond, if you are not afraid of the rain yourself."

There seemed no alternative; so Laurence

assented to an immediate return to the boat, comforting himself with the hope that the gleam of sunlight was the harbinger of a fine evening. He insisted, however, upon borrowing a thick shawl and a railway rug from the landlady at Sunbury, in case of the worst.

For half a mile the faint streak of sunshine lighted the voyagers, and then the worst came; the floodgates of the sky were opened, and a summer deluge descended upon the quiet river. Mr. Desmond packed his two charges in the borrowed wraps, and sculled with a desperate vigour.

"It's most unlucky," he said; "there's nothing for it between this and home."

The rain fell in torrents and without ceasing, until the lights of Hampton shone upon them, blotted and blurred by the storm. Long peals of thunder grumbled in the distance; vivid lightnings lit the pale faces of the women; while Mr. Desmond pulled steadily on, lifting the boat over a broad sweep of water with every swoop of his sculls.

One of the voyagers in that boat took a kind of pleasure in the storm. To Emily Jerningham this splashing of rain and sonorous pealing of thunder seemed better than the summer twilight, the calm June sky, and glassy water—that outward peace which had so jarred upon the tempest within.

"Oh, if we could go on through storm and rain to the end! if we could drift out of this earthly river into the thick darkness of the great ocean!" she said to herself; "if the tangled skein of life could be severed with one stroke of the witch's scissors! But we have to unravel the skein with our own weary fingers, and lay the threads smoothly out before we dare say our work is done, and lie down beside it to die."

They were at River Lawn by this time, drenched to the skin, despite the borrowed wraps. Mrs. Jerningham's butler was waiting at the top of the landing-stage with umbrellas, and within there were fires burning and warm garments ready for the drenched

travellers. Wilson took forcible possession of her dripping mistress in the hall.

"Oh, mum, with your cough!" she exclaimed, in tones of horror; while Mrs. Colton assisted in drawing off the pulpy mass of limp gauze that had been such airy silken fabric in the morning.

"Never mind my cough, Wilson," said Mrs. Jerningham, impatiently. "Pray see to Lucy, aunt; she was less protected by the railway-rug than I. Good-night, Laurence, since I suppose I shall not be allowed to appear again this evening. Mr. Desmond will stop here to-night of course, aunt; will you see that he has a warm room, and that he drinks brandy-and-water, and that kind of thing? Let me see you to-morrow, please, Laurence; good-night."

After this Mrs. Jerningham consented to be carried off by the devoted Wilson, who did all she could to undo the mischief done by that watery voyage from Sunbury.

More than one dweller beneath the pretty,

fantastic roof of that river-side villa lay wakeful and restless throughout the summer night, listening to the pattering of the rain, the sobbing gusts of wind among the trees, and at daybreak the shrill clamour of distant farmyards. Three there were in that house for whom life's journey seemed to lie through the thick wilderness—a wilderness unlighted by sun, moon, or stars; pathless, painful obscurity.

In the breakfast-room that morning there was no sign of Mrs. Jerningham. Wilson sent to say that her mistress had slept very little, and was altogether too ill to rise; and on this Mrs. Colton repaired to her niece's room, leaving Lucy and Laurence alone together at the breakfast-table, sorely embarrassed to find themselves so left.

Lucy looked down at her plate, and to all appearance became absorbed in a profound meditation upon the pattern of the china. Laurence cut open the *Times*, and made a conventional remark upon the previous night's debate,

concerning the subject whereof Lucy knew about as much as she knew of lunar volcanoes.

Mrs. Colton returned very quickly, much alarmed by her niece's condition. She sent a messenger for the local doctor immediately, while Lucy ran away from the breakfast-table to see if she could be of any use to the invalid.

"I trust Emily is not much the worse for last night's business," said Laurence, alarmed by Mrs. Colton's evident anxiety.

"I fear it has done her great harm," replied the matron; "her cough is very trying, and she is in a high fever. I hope Mr. Canterham will come at once."

"I will wait to see him, and then run up to town for Dr. Leonards,' said Laurence.

The local doctor came speedily. He looked very grave when he returned from his patient's room. He confessed that there was fever, and some danger of inflammation.

"I will bring down Dr. Leonards," said Laurence.

"I think it would be wise to do so," replied

the Hampton surgeon, wondering who this gentleman was who took so decided a part.

Mr. Desmond lost no time in carrying out his intention; and Dr. Leonards arrived at River Lawn at four o'clock that afternoon, accompanied by Laurence, who could not rest in London.

"I warned Mrs. Jerningham of her danger," said the physician, gravely.

"Indeed? I never heard that there was any cause for alarm. Did you make her understand as much?"

"I spoke as plainly as one dares speak to a patient, and I begged her to let me talk to her aunt. But she forbade this, and promised to take all possible care.

"And she has taken no care. Great God, it is a kind of suicide!"

The passionate exclamation startled the doctor, and he looked at Laurence, wondering what relationship he bore to the lady of whom they had been speaking. Laurence saw the wondering look, and divined its meaning.

"I have known Mrs. Jerningham for many years," he said. "Her father was one of my oldest and closest friends. It was at my instigation that she consulted you, but I had no idea there was danger."

There was no more said. Dr. Leonards saw the patient, and conversed with the Hampton surgeon. That there was danger he made no attempt to deny, when closely questioned by Mrs. Colton, who was half-distracted by this sudden calamity. He did not indeed say that the case was hopeless, but his manner was by no means hopeful.

"The cough has been obstinately neglected for months," he said; "and the maid tells me there has been frequent spitting of blood."

"And it has all been hidden from me," cried Mrs. Colton; "how cruel—how cruel!"

"Yes, it is sad that there should have been such concealment. I was very angry with the maid; but she told me she dared not disobey her mistress. I cannot conceal from you that there has been great mischief done."

This interview took place in the drawing-room, while Mr. Desmond paced to and fro the lawn, outside the open windows, anguish-stricken.

This sudden peril to the woman he had loved —to whom he was so closely bound by a tie so binding, so intangible—came upon him as an overwhelming calamity. A sense of guilt, remorse unspeakable, smote his heart. He had grown weary of his bondage; yet the possibility of his freedom appalled him. There was grief, there was horror in the thought of liberty so regained. In this hour of Emily Jerningham's peril, the man who had loved her forgot everything except that she had been dear to him. The old tenderness was re-awakened in his breast. He forgot her jealousies, her sneers, her caprices, her fretfulness,—everything but the one alarming fact of her illness.

He intercepted Dr. Leonards, and obtained from him a clearer statement than the physician had cared to make to Mrs. Colton. The

great man admitted that the symptoms were as bad as they could be.

"I shall see Mrs. Jerningham again to-morrow," he said. "If we can get her safely through this crisis, and send her to a warmer climate for the autumn, we may patch her up. But a permanent cure is quite out of the question; *that* was hopeless from the first."

"From the first? From the time of her first visit to you?"

"Yes."

Laurence went back to London sorely distressed. The remorseful sense of shortcoming that oppresses the mourner in every earthly severance weighed heavily upon him. Few and infrequent had been the reproaches that had escaped his lips; but in his heart he had often rebelled against Emily Jerningham's tyranny. And she had loved him only too dearly; her jealousy, her despotism, had been alike the evidence of that too-exacting affection. Could he be so ungrateful as to revolt against so tender a tyranny, so flattering a despotism?

He had rebelled; he had found his chains almost intolerable; and he could not forgive himself this secret treason.

For a fortnight he went to and fro between London and River Lawn, neglecting everything, except the indispensable work of his paper, for these daily journeys; but in all those fourteen days he saw neither the invalid nor her faithful nurse, Lucy Alford. He heard from the doctors that Miss Alford's fidelity was beyond all praise, and from Mrs. Colton he also heard of Lucy's devotion. For a week the patient continued in extreme danger, then there came a happy change,—nature rallied. At the end of the fortnight the Hampton doctor was triumphant, the London physician gravely satisfied. Mrs. Jerningham was able to come down to the drawing-room, to take a slow turn once a day on the sunlit strip of lawn before the windows, to eat a few mouthfuls of chicken or jelly, with some faint show of appetite. It was settled that she and her aunt should go to Madeira for the autumn and winter, and for the immediate

benefit of the sea-voyage, as soon as she could well be moved.

"In the meantime I have a little business to arrange," said Mrs. Jerningham.

"Let the business wait till next spring, my dear Emily," pleaded Mrs. Colton.

"I think not, auntie," the invalid answered, with a mournful smile.

On the following day she wrote her husband a brief note, which was addressed to Park Lane, and forwarded thence to Greenlands. The letter ran thus:

"Dear Mr. Jerningham,—I have been very ill, and my doctors insist on my spending the autumn abroad. As there is always in such cases a risk of one's not returning, I should like much to see you before I go. Please come to Hampton at your earliest convenience, and oblige yours faithfully, E. J."

Having despatched this letter, Mrs. Jerningham abandoned herself to the delight of a long,

quiet afternoon with Mr. Desmond, who was to see her that day for the first time since her illness.

He found her much changed; but the change had only increased her beauty. An almost supernal delicacy of tint and spirituality of expression characterized the thin face, the large, luminous eyes. The first sight of that loveliness, which was not of this earth, sent a sharp anguish to his heart. It cost him a struggle to return the invalid's greeting with a cheerful countenance, and to speak hopefully of her improved health.

"I shall never forgive myself that water-journey," he said.

"You have no cause to reproach yourself with that. It was I who obstinately faced the danger from first to last. But the doctors say the water-journey was only my culminating imprudence."

She changed the subject after this, and begged that no one would talk to her of her health. Laurence was surprised to find her so

serene, so cheerful, so thoughtful of others, and forgetful of her own weakness. Never had she appeared to him more beautiful, never so estimable. Her manner to Lucy was peculiarly kind and tender.

"You can never know what this dear girl has been to me!" she said, holding Lucy's hand in both her own as she praised her. "In those long, miserable nights of delirium—I was delirious every night for more than a week, Laurence—I used to see her kind, pitying face watching me; and there was comfort in it when I was at the worst. Wilson was very good, and Aunt Fanny all that is kind and devoted; but this dear child seems to have been created to comfort the sick."

"I used to nurse poor papa when he was ill," the girl answered, simply. "He was often delirious—much worse than you, Mrs. Jerningham; and he used to want to throw himself out of the window, or to kill himself with his razors. And then he would grow angry, and say that flies were tormenting him, and try to

catch them,—when there were no flies, you know. It was very dreadful."

By and by Mrs. Jerningham asked to be left alone with her friend.

"I want to ask Mr. Desmond's advice about business affairs, auntie," she said. "He knows as much law as most lawyers, you know."

Mrs. Colton discreetly withdrew, accompanied by Lucy.

"It is nearly ended, Laurence," said Mrs. Jerningham, when they were gone. She looked up at Mr. Desmond with a tender, earnest look, and held out her wasted hand. He took the pale, semi-transparent hand and raised it to his lips.

"What is nearly ended, my dear Emily?" he asked, gently.

"Your bondage."

"God forbid, if that means that I am to lose you."

"Yes, Laurence, that is inevitable. I doubt if the knot could ever have been disentangled; but it can be cut. Death makes an easy end

of many difficulties; and I think nothing less than death could have ended our perplexities. I am not going to preach a sermon, dear friend. I only want you to understand that my doom is sealed, and that I know it is so, and am not altogether sorry."

"Oh, Emily, what a bitter reproof to me!"

"No, Laurence, a reproof to myself. My own short-sighted selfishness has been the cause of all our sufferings; for we have suffered acutely, both of us. I had no right to absorb your life; no right to hinder you from forming ties without which the most prosperous life seems blank and dreary; no right to stand between you and a home. But it is all over. I am drifting out of the troubled sea into a quiet harbour, and I can afford to be, not generous, but just."

"Emily!"

"Hear me patiently, dear. I will not talk of these things again. I know where your heart has been given, and what a pure unselfish love you have, almost unconsciously,

won for yourself. I knew of that innocent love months ago; but I only knew your sentiments on the day of our Chertsey picnic. I was in the fernery when you told Lucy your secret. Yes, Laurence, I listened. It was a contemptible act, of course; but I was too desperate to consider that. I heard all you said—all. I heard enough to know your devotion, your generosity; to hate my own selfishness. All that day I felt myself the vilest of creatures. I knew that it was my duty to set you free; but I shrank, with a miserable cowardly shrinking, from the sacrifice. I knew that for you and me together there could be no such thing as happiness, either in the present or the future; but I was capable of chaining you to my wretchedness rather than of seeing you happy with another. All that is most base and selfish in my nature was in the ascendant that day. No words can tell how I struggled with my wickedness. I was not strong enough to vanquish it. I knew that it was my duty to surrender every claim upon

you; but I could not bring myself to face that duty. From the maze of my perplexities, extrication seemed impossible. Happily for all of us, Providence has given me a means of escape. I may keep you my prisoner to the end of my life, Laurence, and yet be guilty of no supreme selfishness, for my days are numbered."

"My dear Emily, why imagine this?"

"I know it, Laurence. I did not need to read it in the faces of my doctors, as I have read it. For a long time I have felt a sense of age creeping upon me; a weariness of life, which is not natural to a woman of thirty. Death has approached me very slowly, but his hold is so much the more sure. Comfort me as much as you like, Laurence, but do not delude me. I know that I have a very short time to spend upon this earth; let me spend some of it with you."

"I will be your slave, dear."

"And when I am gone you will forget how sorely I have tried you? You will remember

me with tenderness? Yes, I know you will. And your young wife shall be no loser by my friendship, Laurence. I have the power to will away some of the money settled on me by Mr. Jerningham, and I shall divide it between my aunt and Lucy. My aunt has a very good income of her own, you know, and needs nothing from me, except as a proof of my affection for her. Your young wife shall not come to you dowerless, Laurence! Your wife! How sweet that word 'wife' can sound! I can fancy you in your home. You will not marry *very* soon after I am gone, Laurence?"

"My dearest," cried Laurence, with a sob, "do you think old ties are so easily broken? No, Emily, the love I have borne for you is a part of my manhood. It cannot be put away. That innocent girl, with her tender homelike sweetness, stole my heart before I was aware it could change; but she cannot blot out the past. If ever she is my wife, I shall love her dearly and faithfully, and a home shared with her will be very pleasant to me; but in the

sacred corner of my heart must for ever remain the image of my first love. Men do not forget these things, Emily; nor is the second love the same as the first; and the man who outlives the faith of his youth feels that 'there hath passed away a glory from the earth.'"

"You will remember me, and there will be some regret in the remembrance. I ask no more of Fate. Oh, Laurence, we have had some happy hours together! Try to remember those. My life within the past year or two has been a long disease. Try to forget how I have worried you with my causeless jealousies, my selfish exactions."

Very tender and reassuring were the words which Laurence Desmond spoke to his first love after this. An almost extinguished affection revives in such an hour as this. As the candle of life burns brightest at the close, so too Love's torch has its expiring splendour, and flames anew before we turn it down for ever.

When Lucy and Mrs. Colton returned from

their walk they found the invalid unusually cheerful. The voyage to Madeira was discussed, and Emily talked with delight of that distant island. Mr. Desmond was well up in the topography of the remote settlement, and planned everything in the pleasantest manner for the avoidance of fatigue to the invalid.

"I wish Potter were more used to travelling," said Mrs. Colton, of the River Lawn butler. "We shall have to take him with us, I think; but he will be quite lost among Spaniards and Portuguese, and I don't know how he will be able to arrange affairs for us with regard to hotel accommodation, and so on."

"I will relieve Potter from all responsibility upon that question," said Mr. Desmond.

"You!" cried Emily.

"Yes, if you will permit me to be your escort. I spent a week in Madeira when I was on my Spanish wanderings."

"And you will leave London and your literary work in order to make our journey pleasant for us?"

"I would hazard more important interests than those I have at stake."

Mrs. Jerningham's eyes grew dim, and she had no words in which to thank the faithful slave from whom a few months before she would have haughtily demanded such allegiance, and bitterly resented its refusal.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FINAL INTERVIEW.

Mr. Jerningham was prompt to comply with his wife's request. On the second morning after the despatch of Emily's letter, the master of Greenlands appeared at River Lawn; and this, allowing for time lost in the reposting of the letter, was as soon as it was possible for him to arrive there.

The change in his wife was painfully obvious to him, and shocked him deeply.

"I am sorry to see you looking so ill, Emily," he said, concealing his surprise by an effort.

"Do you think I should have sent for you if I had not been very ill? It was very good of you to come so promptly. I have to thank you for much generosity, for much thoughtful

kindness, during the years of our separation. Believe me, I have fully appreciated your kind feeling, your delicacy. But since my illness, there has come upon me the feeling that something more was due to me than kindness or delicacy; something more due from me to you than quiet submission to your wishes. Do not think that I have entrapped you into this visit in order to reproach you, or to exalt myself. Justification for my conduct there is none. I can never hope to rehabilitate myself in your eyes or in my own; all I desire is that you should know the whole truth. Will you kindly listen to me and believe me? I have kept silence for years; I speak now under the impression that I have but a few weeks to live; you cannot think that I shall speak falsely."

"I am not capable of doubting your word, even under less solemn circumstances. But I trust you overrate your danger; convalescence is always a period of depression."

"We will not talk of that; my own instinct and the sentence of my doctors alike condemn

me. They talk about the restorative effect of a sea-voyage, and send me to Madeira for the autumn and winter; and that, for a woman of my age, is a sentence of death."

"Let us hope it is only a precautionary measure."

"I have no eager desire for life; I can afford to submit to Providence. And now let me speak of a subject which is of more importance to me than any question as to the time I have to live. Let me speak to you of my honour—as a woman and as a wife. When you decreed that all ties between us except the one legal bond should be severed, your decree was absolute. There was no room left for discussion. You sent me your solicitor, who told me, with much delicate circumlocution, that your home was no longer to be my home. There was to be neither scandal, nor disgrace, nor punishment for me, who had sinned against my duty as a wife. I was only to be banished. I was too much in the wrong to dispute the justice of this sentence, Harold; too proud to sue for

mercy. I let judgment go by default. You banished your wife from the fortress of home; you deposed her from an unassailable position to a doubtful standing; and you did this upon the strength of a packet of letters, which a bolder offender would have received at her own address, and which a more experienced sinner would have burned. I want you to grant me one favour, Harold,—read those letters before I die."

"I will read them when you please. Yes, I dare say I did wrong in cancelling our union upon such trifling evidence of error; but I acted from my own instinct. I have been a Sybarite in matters of sentiment; and to live with a woman whose heart and faith were not all my own, would have been unutterably hateful to me. I jumped at no conclusions. I did not suffer my thoughts to condemn you unheard. But you had been living under my roof in secret correspondence with a man who called himself my friend. What could I do? Could I come to you and say,

'Please do not receive any more secret letters from Desmond; that is a kind of thing which I object to?' You would of course have promised to oblige me, and Desmond would have addressed his letters to another office. Having deceived me once, you see, I could hardly hope you would not deceive me again. That sort of thing grows upon one. On the other hand, why should I make a foolish scandal, read Desmond's letters,—which would have been an ungentlemanly thing to do,—subpœna your maid, your footman, make myself ridiculous, and humiliate you, for the profit of lawyers and the amusement of newspaper readers; and failing in convicting you of the last and worst of infamies, take you back to my home and heart a spotless wife? It seemed to me that there could be no course for us but a tranquil and polite separation."

"If you had read the letters you might have thought differently."

"My dear girl, with every wish to be indulgent, I can scarcely admit that. To my mind

there are no degrees in these things. A woman is faithful or unfaithful. If the letter she receive contains but few lines about an opera-box, they should be lines which she can show her husband without a blush. There must be no lurking treason between the lines. She must not pose herself *en femme incomprise*, and call herself a faithful wife, because her infidelity does not come under the jurisdiction of the Divorce Court. You will say, perhaps, that this comes with a bad grace from me, whose life has been far from spotless. But, you see, spotlessness is not a man's speciality; and however vile he may be himself, he has a natural belief in the purity of woman. She seems to him a living temple of the virtues, and he scarcely expects to find a pillar-post lurking in the shadow of the sacred portico.

"I was very weak, very wicked," murmured Emily; "but I have some excuses for my error which other women cannot claim. If I had thought that you loved me,—if I had seen reason for believing that our marriage had brightened

your life in the smallest degree, or that my affection, howsoever freely given, could ever have been precious to you, it might have been otherwise with me. Oh, believe me, Mr. Jerningham, you might have made me a good wife, if you had cared to do so. Men have a power to mould us for which they rarely give themselves credit. It was not because of the twenty years' difference between our ages that I grew weary of my home, and sighed for more congenial society, for sympathy I had never found there. *That* was not the gulf between us. It was because you did not love me, and did not even care to pretend any love for me, that I welcomed the friendship of my father's old friend, and forgot the danger involved in such sympathy. Your marriage was an act of generosity, a chivalrous protection of a helpless kinswoman, and I ought to have been grateful. I was grateful; but a woman's heart has room for something more than gratitude. A man who marries as you married me is bound to complete his sacrifice. He must give his

heart as well as his home and fortune. You gave me your cheque-book, but you let me see only too plainly that in the bargain which made us man and wife there was to be no exchange of hearts. What a union! How many times did we dine *tête à tête* in the two years of our wedded life?—once—twice—well, perhaps half a dozen times; and I can recall your weary yawns, our little conventional speeches, on those rare occasions. For two years we lived under the same roof, and we never even quarrelled. You treated me with unalterable generosity, unchanging courtesy, and you held me at arm's length; yet if you had wished to make yourself master of my heart, the conquest would have been an easy one. I was wounded by Mr. Desmond's silence; I was melted by your kindness. It would not have been difficult for me to give you a wife's devotion."

"I dare say you are right, Emily," Mr. Jerningham answered, with a little, languid sigh. His wife's earnestness had taken him by surprise,

and a new light had broken in upon his mind as she spoke.

It was possible that there was some truth in these earnest, passionate words. He admitted as much to himself. Something more might have been required of him than a gentlemanly toleration of the woman he had chosen to share his home, to bear his name. The higher, Christian idea of man's accountableness for the soul of his weaker partner was quite out of the region of Mr. Jerningham's ethics; but, on purely social grounds, he felt that he had done his cousin and his wife some wrong.

"I had exhausted my capacity for loving before I married," he thought; "and I gave this poor creature a handful of ashes instead of a human heart."

After a few minutes' silence he addressed his wife with an unaccustomed tenderness of tone.

"Yes, my dear Emily, you have just ground for complaint against me. My error was greater than yours; and now we meet after a

lapse of years—both of us older, possibly wiser—I can only say, forgive me."

He held out the hand of friendship, which his wife accepted in all humility of spirit.

"No, no," she exclaimed, "there can be no question of forgiveness on my part. You have been only too good to me, and my complaints are groundless and peevish. I suppose it is natural to a woman to try to excuse herself by accusing some one else. But, believe me, I have been no stranger to remorse. I could not die until I had thanked you for your indulgent kindness during the years of our separation, and asked you to forgive me. But before I ask for pardon, I beg you to read those letters."

She took a little packet from her work-basket and handed it to her husband.

"I will do anything to oblige you," said Mr. Jerningham, kindly; "but I assure you it is very unpleasant to me to read another man's letters."

He took the packet to a distant window, and there began his task. The letters were long—

such clever, gossiping, semi-sentimental letters as a man writes to a lady with whom he is *aux petits soins*, without ulterior motive of any kind, for the mere pleasure involved in opening his mind and heart to a charming, sympathetic creature, whom he holds it better for himself "to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all." Such letters are little more than the vehicles by which a man lets off the poetic gases of his brain, the herbals wherein he preserves the rarer flowers of his mind. Into such letters a man can pour all his caprices of fancy, all his audacities of thought; and as he writes, his mind is divided between tenderness for the dear recipient of his outpourings and a lurking consciousness that his letters will adorn his biography, and hold their place in polite literature, when the hand that runs along the paper to-day has mouldered in a coffin. In such letters every writer appears at his best. In the present he is writing for only one indulgent critic; in the future he fancies himself revealed to posterity with an audacious freedom forbid-

den by the natural reserve of the man who knows he will have to read a hundred and twenty reviews of his book.

Mr. Jerningham read Laurence Desmond's letters very patiently. He smiled faintly now and then, in polite recognition of some little playful flight of the writer's fancy; but he was far from being amused. More than one smothered but dismal yawn betrayed his weariness, and it was with a sigh of supreme relief that he at last returned them to his wife.

"They are really clever," he said, "and hardly objectionable. They are the kind of thing that a Chateaubriand might have written to a Madame Récamier, and she was the very archetype of female virtue. I can only regret the one fact that they were not addressed to your own house."

"My foolish cowardice was the sole cause of that error. I thought you would object to my receiving Mr. Desmond's letters, and they were a great pleasure to me."

"My poor child, if you had only examined

my library in Park Lane, you would have found a hundred volumes of letters, from Pliny downwards, all of them better than Mr. Desmond's effusions. But I suppose there is a charm in being the sole recipient of a man's confidences. Every man writes that kind of thing once in his life; I have done it myself."

"And can you forgive me freely?"

"Forgive you! Why, my dear child, you have been freely forgiven from the hour in which we parted. I thought it best and wisest to end a union which had been too lightly made. It is possible I was wrong. Unhappily, I had exhausted my fund of hope before I met you, and had acquired an unpleasant knack of expecting the worst in every situation of life. I did not take those letters as conclusive evidence of guilt; on the contrary, I was quite able to believe their existence was compatible with innocence. But I told myself that such letters must be the beginning of the end, and I took prompt steps to avert an impending catastrophe. I did not want to be a spectacle to men

and angels as the husband of a runaway wife. 'There shall be no running away,' I said. 'We will shake hands, and take our separate roads, without noise or scandal.' I suppose it was a selfish policy; and again I am reduced to say, forgive me."

After this Mr. Jerningham spoke no more of the past. He talked of his wife's health, her future movements. He tried to inspire her with hope of amendment, in spite of her physician's ominous looks, her own instincts; nothing could be kinder or more delicate than the manner in which he expressed himself both to Emily and to Mrs. Colton, who came in from the garden presently, and whom he thanked, with emphasis, for her devotion to his wife.

A quarter of an hour afterwards he was seated alone in a railway carriage, speeding Londonwards by express train, and meditating profoundly upon the interview at River Lawn.

"Dying," he said to himself; "of that there can be no doubt. Of all the hazards of fate, this was the last I should have expected. And

I shall be free; free to marry again, if I could conceive so wild a folly; free to marry Helen de Bergerac; free to inflict the maximum of misery upon an innocent girl, in order to secure for myself the minimum of happiness. And yet, O God, what happiness there might be in such a union, if I could be loved again as I once was loved!"

He clasped his hands, and the day-dreamer's ecstasy brightened his face for a moment. The setting sun shone red upon the river over which the train was speeding, and Harold Jerningham remembered such a rosy summer sunset five-and-twenty years ago, and a sweet girl-face looking up at him, transfigured by a girl's pure love.

CHAPTER IX.

TIMELY BANISHMENT.

Before Eustace Thorburn could nerve himself for the self-sacrificial act which was to accomplish his banishment from that Berkshire Eden known as Greenlands, Fate took the doing of the deed out of his hands, and brought about his departure in the simplest and most natural manner.

For the completion of M. de Bergerac's ponderous work, it was necessary that certain rare manuscripts in the Imperial Library of Paris should be examined, and for the examination of these Mr. Thorburn's daily increasing knowledge of Sanscrit rendered him fairly competent. For the exile, Paris was a forbidden city, but to this young man, recommended by Mr. Jerningham, the Imperial Library would be open. M.

de Bergerac had long meditated asking this favour of his secretary, and had watched the young student's progress in the Oriental dialects with impatient longing. The time had now arrived when he felt that Eustace was qualified to undertake the required work, and he took an early opportunity of sounding him upon the subject.

"There is work for some months," he said; "but Paris is at all times a pleasant city, and I do not think you would be tired of a residence there. I can give you introductions to agreeable people, who will receive my friend with all kindness. You can find some airy apartment near the library, and take your life easily. Your limited means will secure you from the temptations and dissipations of the capital, but not deprive you of its simpler pleasures."

"My dear sir, you are all goodness. I shall be only too happy to work for you in Paris, and on the most moderate terms. I have no wish for pleasure. Life is so short, and art so

long; and I have such an impatient desire to succeed in the only career that is open to me."

"It is a noble impatience, and I will not stand in your way; give me four hours a day of such work as you have given me here, and the rest of your time will be your own."

After this interview there was nothing to hinder Mr. Thorburn's departure. He waited only for his employer's instructions, and his familiarity with all the details of the work made these instructions very easy to him; while frequent correspondence with his patron would enable him to work in perfect harmony with the author of the great book. Within a week of his perusal of his father's book, he bade his friends at Greenlands farewell, and started for London *en route* for Paris, provided with a letter from Mr. Jerningham to the chiefs of the British Embassy, which would insure his free use of the Imperial Library.

Helen's face told him that she was sorry to lose her friend and instructor. But the depth of that sorrow he could not fathom.

"Papa says it is likely you will be away three or four months," she said. "How much of my Greek I shall lose in that time! Papa never can find time for me to read to him now; and you will forget your piano-forte music, for I don't suppose you will take the trouble to practise in Paris. And I shall have no one to play the basses of my overtures."

Eustace murmured something to the effect that for him the cessation of those basses would be desolation and despair, but more than such vague protestations he dared not trust himself to utter.

"It is fortunate for me that I am sent away," he thought. "I could not keep silence much longer; and I know not when I could have found courage to tear myself from this sweet home."

Helen's thoughtful eyes looked up at him, wonderingly, as he stood before her, with her hand retained in his just a little longer than their relatve positions warranted. But when they met his, the dark-blue eyes fell

again, and the two stood silent, as if spell-bound.

The spell was broken by the voice of M. de Bergerac calling from the porch.

"The fly has been waiting ten minutes," he cried. "Come, Thorburn, if you want to catch the 4.30 from Windsor."

"Good-bye, Miss de Bergerac—God bless you! Thank you a thousand times for all your goodness to me!" said Eustace; and in the next instant he was gone.

"*My* goodness! And he has been so kind to me," murmured Helen.

She went to the open window and watched the fly drive away, and waved a parting salutation to the traveller with her pretty white hand. When the sound of the wheels had melted into silence, she went back to her books and her piano, and wondered to find how much there seemed wanting in her life now that Mr. Thorburn was gone.

"What will papa do without him?" she asked. The Newfoundland came into the room

panting and distressed as she spoke. He had followed the vehicle that bore Eustace away, and had been repulsed by the driver.

"And what shall *we* do without him, Heph?" asked the young lady, hopelessly, as she embraced her favourite.

Eustace found his Uncle Dan waiting dinner for him in the comfortable room in Great Ormond Street; and in that genial companionship he spent the eve of his departure very pleasantly. The two men talked long and earnestly of the book which both had read. Eustace told his uncle of his idea about a Scotch marriage; and they went over the significant passages in the autobiographical romance together, with much deliberation.

"Yes, lad; I believe you've hit it," said Daniel Mayfield at last. "These vague hints certainly bear out your notion. I know not how far this domicile of something less than a year may constitute a Scotch marriage, for the laws of Scotland upon the marriage-question

have been ever inscrutable ; but it is evident the man believed himself in your sister's power."

"I should like to find the scene of my mother's sorrow," said Eustace. "Will you take a holiday when my work is done in Paris, Uncle Dan, and go to the Highlands with me, to look for that spot ?"

"My dear boy, how can we hope to identify the place ?"

"By means of this book, and by inquiry when we get to the neighbourhood."

"The book gives us nothing but initials."

"No ; but if the initials are genuine, as it is most likely they are, we may easily identify the spot with the aid of a good map."

"I doubt it."

"I assure you the thing is possible," said Eustace, earnestly. "There are several initials indicative of different localities. Let us start with the supposition that these are genuine ; and if we can fit them to localities within a given radius, we may fancy ourselves on the right track. We have the general features of

the place—a wild, mountainous district, steep cliffs, sands, and lonely shanties. See, I have jotted down the places indicated by initials. Here they are:

'1st. H. H. The head-quarters of Dion.

'2nd. D. P. A craggy headland, crowned by a little classic temple.

'3nd. The most uninteresting ruins in A. A. would seem, therefore, to be the initial of the country.

"There are your indications, Uncle Dan; the map or a guide-book must do the rest. You would take as much trouble to decipher a puzzle in arithmetic, or to work a difficult problem in Euclid. My mother's fate is more to me—nearer to your heart, I know—than all Euclid."

"But if we find the scene and identify it, what then?"

"The scene may tell me the name of the man."

"What, Eustace! still the old foolish eagerness to know what is better left unknown?"

"To the very end of my life, Uncle Dan. And now let us look at your map of Scotland."

"I have no map worth looking at. No, Eustace, there shall be no attempts at discovery to-night. Leave me that scrap of paper, and while you are away I will try to identify these places. When you return, we will take our Highland holiday together, come what may. It will be fresh life to me to get away from London, and I will not say how pleasant it will be to me to take my pleasure with you."

"Dear, true friend."

They shook hands, in token that to this plan both were irrevocably bound.

The morning's mail-train carried Eustace to Dover, and on the next night he slept at a humble hotel near the Luxembourg. He had no difficulty in finding a commodious lodging within his modest means, and he began his work at the great library two days after his arrival. The people to whom he brought letters of introduction were people of the best kind, but Eustace availed himself sparely of their hospitable invitations. His days were spent in the library; his nights were given to

the great poem, which grew and ripened under his patient hand.

"If it should be a success!" he said to himself; "if it should go home to the hearts of the people—as true poetry should go—at once—with an electric power! It has brought the tears to my eyes, it has quickened the beating of my heart, it has kept me awake of nights with a fever of hope and rapture; but for all that it may be only fustian. A man's dreams and thoughts may be bright enough, but the translation of them cold and dull; or the thoughts themselves may be worthless—rotten wood, not to be made sound by any showy veneer of language."

The poem which was to make or unmake Mr. Thorburn was no metaphysical treatise done into rhyme—no ambitious epic, ponderous as Milton, without Miltonic grandeur. It was a modern romance in verse—a love-story—passionate, tender, tragical, and the heart of the poet throbbed in every line.

His life in Paris was eventless. Very dear

to him were the letters that came from Greenlands—letters in which Helen's name appeared very often,—letters in which he was told that his absence was regretted, his return wished for.

"It is like having a home," he said to himself; "and I dare not return to that dear home, or must return only to confess my secret and submit to a decree of banishment!"

One of the letters from Greenlands—a letter that came to him when he had been about six weeks in Paris—brought him startling news: Harold Jerningham was a widower. The handsome young wife, whom Eustace had heard of from his employer, had died at Madeira.

"They met before the lady left England," wrote M. de Bergerac, "and parted excellent friends. Indeed, they had never quarrelled. The reason of their separation was never revealed to the world, but Harold has half-admitted to me that he was to blame."

CHAPTER X.

SIT TIBI TERRA LEVIS.

For Emily Jerningham life's fitful fever was ended. The change to a softer climate, the welcome warmth of southern breezes, had given her a brief respite, but her doom had been sealed long ago, and her existence had been only a question of so many weeks more or less.

The journey by sea and the first two weeks in the strange island were very sweet to Emily Jerningham. Laurence Desmond accompanied her on that final voyage, and friendship, sanctified by the shadows of the grave, attended her closing days.

This seemed the natural solution to the enigma of her perplexed existence. Death alone could make an easy end of all her diffi-

culties, and she accepted the necessity as a blessed release.

"It has been made easy to me to resign you, Laurence," she said, "and to pray for your future happiness with another. That poor little girl! I know she loves you very dearly. She reverences you as a heroic creature. Upon my word, sir, you are very fortunate. With me, had Fate united us, you would have been compelled to endure all manner of jealousies and caprices; and from that simple Lucy you will receive the pious worship that is ordinarily given only to saints."

Mrs. Jerningham would not allow Laurence to remain with her until the last dread hour. When they had been a fortnight on the island, and had exhausted the little excursions and sights of the place, she persuaded Mr. Desmond to return to England.

"I know you cannot afford to remain so far away," she said. "What may happen to the *Areopagus* in your absence! I have always heard that sub-editors are a most incorrigible class of

people. They insert those things which they should not insert, and so on. You may find yourself pledged to something appalling in the way of politics when you get back to London; or discover that one of your dearest friends has been flayed alive by your most savage operator. And, you see, I am so much better. I shall return to England in the spring quite a new creature."

In this manner did Mrs. Jerningham cajole her friend to abandon her. It was the final sacrifice which she offered up—the sacrifice of her sole earthly happiness.

She stood at her window watching the steamer as it left the island, and her heart sank within her.

He was gone out of her life for ever. Thus faded all the glory of her world. She sat alone till long after dusk, thinking of her wasted, mistaken life; while Mrs. Colton fondly believed her charge was enjoying a refreshing slumber.

The English doctor, who attended Mrs. Jer-

ningham daily, found his patient much worse when he made his call upon the morning after Mr. Desmond's departure.

"I am afraid you were guilty of some imprudence yesterday," he said; "for you are certainly not looking quite yourself to-day."

"Yesterday was one of the quietest days I have spent on the island," replied Mrs. Jerningham; "I did not stir out of doors."

"That was a pity; for you ought to enjoy our good weather while it lasts. The rains will set in soon, and you will be a prisoner. But after our rainy season we have a delicious winter; and the voyage from England has done such wonders for you, that I really expect great things between this and the spring."

"Do you mean that you really think I am to live?" asked Mrs. Jerningham, looking at him earnestly; "to drag my life on for weeks and months, and perhaps for years?"

"Upon my honour I have strong hopes, as I told your aunt yesterday; the improvement since your arrival has been so marked that I

can hope anything. You do not know what Madeira can do for weak lungs."

"Then I wish I had never come here."

"My dear madam, you—" cried the doctor, alarmed.

"That sounds very horrible, does it not, Mr. Ransom? But, you see, there is a time when one's life comes to a legitimate end—one's mission is finished. There is no room for one any more upon the earth, as it seems. The priest has said, '*Ite, missa est;*' the end is come. I do not want to prolong my life beyond its natural close; and that has come."

Mr. Ransom looked at his patient as if doubtful whether she were altogether in her right mind. But he did not discuss the subject; he murmured some little soothing commonplace, and departed to warn Mrs. Colton that the patient was disposed to depression of spirits, and must, if possible, be roused and diverted.

"I do not consider it altogether a bad sign," he said, cheeringly; "that low state of the nerves is a very common symptom of convalescence."

To rouse and divert her invalid niece Mrs. Colton strove with conscientious and untiring efforts; but failed utterly. From the hour of Laurence Desmond's departure Emily drooped. A depression came upon her too profound for human consolation. In devout studies, in pious meditations alone she found comfort. Her aunt read to her from the works of the great divines, and in the eloquent and noble pages of Hooker and Taylor, Barrow and South, as well as in the Gospel's simpler record, the weak soul found comfort. But with earthly comfort she had done. A stranger, alone in a strange land, she waited the coming of that awful stranger whom all must meet once—he who "keeps the key of all the creeds." Utter desolation of spirit took possession of her. She was thrown back upon the spiritual world, and was fain to seek a dwelling-place among those shadowy regions, like a shipwrecked mariner cast upon a desert island, and rejoiced to find any refuge from the perils of the great ocean.

Letters came to the lonely invalid, in token that she was not quite forgotten by the world she would fain forget; letters, and papers, and books from Mr. Desmond, who wrote with much affectionate solicitude; notes of condolence and inquiry from the few friends with whom she was on intimate terms. But these were only the last salutations which life sent to her who dwelt by the borders of death—the last farewells waved by friendly hands.

"He is good and self-devoted to the last," she thought, as she read Mr. Desmond's letters; "and I do not think I should have induced him to leave me if he had not believed it would look better for me to be here alone with my aunt."

In this supposition Mrs. Jerningham was correct. Mr. Desmond was too much a man of the world not to be mindful of how things would appear to the eyes of the world, and it had seemed to him better that he should not prolong his stay at Madeira with the invalid.

He had returned to London, therefore, and

had gone back to his work, which seemed very weary at this period of his life.

It was not possible that this utter severance should come to pass between him and Emily Jerningham without pain to himself. A man does not change all at once. However deeply he is bound to the new love, some frail links of the chain that tied him to the old hang about him still, some corner of his heart still holds the first dear image ; and to the love that has been, the sorrow of parting lends a kind of sanctification.

Before leaving England Mrs. Jerningham had taken pains to provide for Lucy's future. The girl would gladly have accompanied her patroness to Madeira, but this Emily would not permit.

"You have had trouble enough in nursing me," she said, kindly ; "and we must now try and find you a home in some pleasant, cheerful family. You must not be exposed any longer to the depressing influence of an invalid's society."

The pleasant family was easily found. Are

there not always a hundred cheerful families eager to enlarge their home-circle by the addition of an agreeable stranger? Mrs. Jerningham showed herself very particular in her choice of a home for her *protégée*; and she was not satisfied until she had discovered an irreproachable clergyman's family, some miles northward of Harrow, who were willing to receive Miss Alford, and beneath whose roof she would have opportunities of improving herself.

"But, dear Mrs. Jerningham, had I not better go to the lady in Ireland, or to some other lady who wants a governess?" remonstrated Lucy. "I ought to be getting my own living, you know. Why should I be a burden upon your kindness? If I were of any use to you, it would be different; but you will not let me be your nurse."

"My dear girl, you are no burden! It is a pleasure to me to provide in some measure for your future. I promised Mr. Desmond that I would be your friend. You must let me keep my promise, Lucy."

Of the interview which had taken place between Emily and Laurence, Lucy knew nothing. Neither did she know that there had been a listener during that never-to-be-forgotten half-hour in which Mr. Desmond had told her his secret.

What her own future might be she could not imagine ; and this arrangement for placing her with a clergyman's family beyond Harrow seemed to her a generous folly upon the part of Mrs. Jerningham.

She submitted only to please that lady ; it would have seemed ungracious to refuse such kindness ; but Lucy fancied she would have been happier if she had been permitted to renew her old struggles with fortune.

"Remember you are to improve yourself, Lucy," said Mrs. Jerningham ; "I want you to become the most accomplished and ladylike of women."

And thus they kissed and parted. Emily breathed more freely when the girl had left her. That daily and hourly companionship

with her happy rival had not been without its bitterness.

"The poor little thing has been very good to me," she thought; "but I cannot forget that she will be Laurence Desmond's wife when I am lying in my grave. And the winter winds will blow among the churchyard-trees, and the pitiless rain will fall upon my grave, and those two will sit beside their fire, and watch their children at play, and he will forget that I ever lived."

Lucy went to her new home a few days before Mrs. Jerningham and her following sailed for Madeira. Between Lucy and Laurence there was no farewell. Mrs. Jerningham told Mr. Desmond what she had done for his old friend's daughter, and he approved and thanked her; but he expressed no wish to see the young lady, or to be introduced to the family with whom she had taken up her abode.

He made no attempt to see Lucy on his return from Madeira. In this he was governed by a supreme delicacy of feeling.

"While Emily lives I belong to her," he said to himself. "I am bound by a tie which only death can loosen."

The hour in which that tie was to be loosened came very soon. A heart-broken letter from Mrs. Colton told Laurence that he was a free man.

"She spoke of you a few minutes before her death," wrote Emily Jerningham's aunt. "'Tell him that one of my last prayers was for his future happiness,' she said. She suffered much in the last week; but the last day was very peaceful. I can never tell you all her thoughtfulness for others—for you, for me, for Lucy Alford, for her servants, the few poor people at Hampton of whom she knew anything. Her long illness worked a great change in her—a holy and blessed change. Generous, affectionate, and noble-minded she had always been; but the piety of her closing hours was more than I should have dared to hope, remembering her somewhat careless way of thinking when she was in health. In death she is love-

lier than in life ; there is a divine smile upon her face now which I never saw before. I have received instructions from Mr. Jerningham. My beloved niece is to be buried in the family vault in Berkshire. Oh, Mr. Desmond! what a mournful homeward voyage lies before me! I know not how I am to endure the rest of my life without my more than daughter!"

Laurence Desmond's tears fell fast upon the letter. The old familiar vision of the little garden at Passy, the proud, young face, the slim, white-robed figure, came back to him ; and he recalled one summer afternoon, when his lips had almost shaped themselves into the portentous question, and he had restrained himself with an effort, remembering what his mentors of the smoking-room had said about the impossibility of marriage amongst a civilized community without a due provision for the indispensabilities of civilized existence.

"This comes of planning one's life by the ethics of the club-house!" he said to himself, bitterly.

CHAPTER XI.

HIDDEN HOPES.

Upon Mr. Jerningham the tidings of his wife's death came suddenly, but not unexpectedly. He hastened to arrange that all honour should be paid to the ashes of this fair scion of the house of Jerningham. The ponderous doors of the vault which had not been opened since his father's death unclosed to receive his wife's coffin. The bells which had rung a merry peal of welcome when she first came to Greenlands tolled long and dismally upon the day of her burial. All deference and ceremony that could have attended the burial of a beloved wife attended the funeral rites of her who had been only tolerated by her husband. Harold Jerningham was chief mourner at that stately, yet quiet ceremonial. His own hand had ad-

dressed the invitation that summoned Laurence Desmond to the funeral.

"The world shall read how we stood, side by side, at the door of the vault," thought Mr. Jerningham; "and the lips of Slander shall be mute about the poor soul's friendship for her father's friend."

Mr. Desmond understood and appreciated the delicacy of mind which had inspired the invitation. Even in that last dread ceremonial it was well that there should be some votive offering to Society. That deity has her shrine in every temple, and must be propitiated alike at wedding-feast or funeral. She is the modern successor of those nameless goddesses whom the men of old called amiable, and worshipped in mortal fear.

Theodore de Bergerac was present at the opening and closing of the vault, and invited Laurence Desmond to dinner when they left the church; but his invitation was declined.

"I will run down to dine with you in a week or two, if you will allow me," he said; "but

to-day it is impossible. I have business that will take me back to town."

And so they parted; Laurence to go back to his chambers and spend the evening in dreary meditation, looking over the letters that had been written to him by that hand which now lay cold in the Berkshire vault. He had a photograph of the never-to-be-forgotten face, a few water-colour sketches of the river-scenery about Hampton; and these were all his memorials of the dead.

He packed them carefully in white paper, sealed the packet with many seals, and laid it in the most secret drawer of his desk.

"Thus ends the love of my youth," he said, to himself; "God grant the love of my manhood may come to a happier ending!"

The first two months of his widowhood Mr. Jerningham spent abroad. For some subtle reason of his own he preferred to be away from Greenlands, and from his friends at the cottage, during that period of conventional mourning.

Perhaps he would have been less inclined to absent himself from that beloved retreat if Eustace Thorburn had still been a dweller in M. de Bergerac's household.

That gentleman's residence in Paris threatened to extend itself to several months. The work found for him amongst old manuscripts and rare Oriental books increased every day, and the notes of the great history seemed likely to become as voluminous as Gibbon's *Rome*. Like Gibbon, M. de Bergerac had bestowed the greater part of his lifetime upon the collection of materials for his great book; but the materials, when collected, were more difficult to deal with than those upon which the matchless historian founded his massive monument of human genius; or it may be that M. de Bergerac was something less than Gibbon. In earnestness, at least, he was that great man's equal.

"Do not leave Paris until you have completely sifted the Oriental department of the library," he wrote to his secretary; "and if it

is necessary for you to have the aid of a translator, do not hesitate to engage one."

To this Mr. Thorburn replied, modestly, that his own knowledge of the Oriental languages was increasing day by day; that he had been fortunate enough to fall in with a learned, though somewhat shabby, pundit among the frequenters of the Imperial Library; and that he had induced this person to work with him for an hour or two every evening on very reasonable terms.

"I cannot tell you what pleasure it has been to me to conquer the difficulties of these languages," he wrote to his kind employer. And, indeed, to this friendless young man every grammatical triumph had been sweet, every tedious struggle with the obscurities of Devanagari or Sanscrit a labour of love. Riches or rank he had none to lay at the feet of the fair girl he loved; but by such dryasdust studies as these he could testify his devotion to that service which of all others was most dear to her affectionate heart.

Weeks and months slipped by in these congenial labours. The notes for the great book, and Eustace Thorburn's poem, grew side by side, and the young man had no leisure hour in which to nurse despondent thoughts. He was happier than he could have imagined it possible for him to be away from Greenlands. His work was delightful to him, because he was working for her. Yes; for her! His patient industry at the library was a tribute to her. His poem was written for her; since, if it won him reputation, he might dare to offer her the name so embellished.

To Helen those autumn months seemed very dull. Her father's secretary had made himself so completely a part of the household as to leave a blank not easily filled. Both father and daughter missed his bright face, his earnest, enthusiastic talk, his affectionate but unobtrusive devotion to their smallest interests.

"We shall never have such a friend again, papa," Helen said, naïvely; and the little speech,

with the tone in which it was spoken, inclined M. de Bergerac to think that Harold Jerningham's fears had not been groundless.

"You miss him very much, Helen?"

"More than I thought it possible I could miss any one but you?"

"And yet he only came to us as a stranger, my dear, to perform a stipulated service. In France a young lady would scarcely care to express so much interest in her father's secretary."

The girl's innocent face grew crimson. What! had she said more than was becoming? Had she deserved a reproof from that dear father whom she lived only to please? After this she spoke no more of Eustace Thorburn; but her father's mild reproof had awakened strange misgivings in her mind.

Mr. Jerningham returned to Greenlands before Christmas, and spent that pleasant season at the cottage. A peace of mind which he had not known since boyhood possessed him in that calm abode, now that he was a free man, and

Eustace Thorburn no longer exhibited before him the insolent happiness of youth.

"This is indeed home!" he exclaimed, as he sat by M. de Bergerac's hearth, and heard the carol-singers in the garden. "It is more than thirty years since Christmas was kept at the great house yonder. I wonder whether it will ever be kept there again within my life?"

"Why not?" asked his old friend; "you are young enough to marry again."

"Do you think so, Theodore?" inquired Mr. Jerningham, earnestly.

"Do I think so? Who should think so more than I? Was there ever a happier marriage than mine? And I do not ask you to make so bold a venture as I made in marrying a dear girl twenty years my junior. There are handsome and distinguished widows enough in your English society; women who, in the prime of middle age, retain the fresh beauty of their youth, with all the added graces given by experience of life."

"Thanks," said Mr. Jerningham, coldly; "I

should not care to entrust the remnant of my life to a middle-aged person, however well preserved. I can exist without a wife. If ever I marry again, I shall marry for love."

He stole a glance at Helen. She was sitting by the fire, with an open book upon her lap, her eyes fixed dreamily. Where her wandering thoughts might be Harold Jerningham knew not; but he perceived they were not given to him. "Has the hour gone by?" he asked himself. "Has my hour gone for ever?"

"Nobly spoken, my friend," said Theodore; "you will marry for love. And why not? God gave me a fair young bride, and seven years of happiness more complete than a man dare hope for on earth."

No more was said upon a subject so delicate. But from this conversation Mr. Jerningham derived considerable comfort; for he perceived that his old friend found no incongruity in the idea of his seeking something more than a marriage of convenience in a second union.

After this he came to the cottage with some-

thing akin to hope in his breast. Helen received him always with the same sweetness. He was her father's friend, and had been her father's protector in the hour of evil fortune. This fact was ever present to her mind; it imparted to her manner a sweetness which was fatal to Harold Jerningham.

Theodore de Bergerac watched the two together; and one day, as if by inspiration, the secret of his old friend's frequent visits flashed upon him. The danger that had existed for the young secretary existed also for the weary worldling, and girlish sweetness and simplicity had won a heart sated with life's factitious joys.

Within a week after the student achieved this brilliant discovery, Harold Jerningham made a full confession of his weakness.

"I know that at present I am no more to her than her father's old friend," he said, when he had told his story, and had discovered that M. de Bergerac was neither surprised nor shocked by the revelation; "but give me only sufficient time, and I may win that pure heart,

which already half belongs to me by right of my affection for you. Earnest feeling in a man who is not quick to feel must count for something. Do not judge me by my past, Theodore. Dissever me from that past, if you can; for, as I live, I am a new man since I have loved your daughter. To love a creature so pure is a spiritual baptism. If I can win that innocent heart, you will not stand between me and happiness, will you, old friend?"

"If you can win her heart, no; but I will not sacrifice my daughter, or persuade her. I will confess to you that the uncertainty of her future is a constant perplexity to me, and that I would gladly see that future secured. I will say even more than this; I will admit that I should be proud to see my only child allied to a race so distinguished as yours, the mistress of a home so splendid as your Greenlands yonder. But by no word of mine will I influence her to a step so solemn. The difference between your ages is greater than in the case of myself and my dear wife; but the world might

possibly have augured ill for the result of our union. Again, I say, if you can win my child's heart, I will not refuse you her hand."

This was all Mr. Jerningham desired. A reluctant bride, sacrificed on the altar of ambition, would have been no bride for him. He was too much a gentleman not to have recoiled from the brutality involved in such an union. All he desired was the liberty to woo and to win; to set his many gifts against that one obvious disadvantage of his fifty years, and to triumph in spite of that stumbling-block.

"Time and I against any two," said Philip II. of Spain. Mr. Jerningham's chief reliance was on time; time, which might first render his society habitual, and then necessary, to Helen; time, which would familiarize her with the difference between their ages, until that difference would scarcely seem to exist; time, which by demonstrating his constancy and devotion, must in the end give him a claim upon Helen's gratitude, a right to her compassion.

Time might, perhaps, have done all this for

Mr. Jerningham but for one small circumstance: the stake for which he was playing this patient game had already been won. It remained no more upon the table for gamblers to venture its winning. The girl's innocent heart had been given unconsciously to a silent adorer; and while Harold Jerningham was hanging upon her looks and studying her careless words, all her tenderest thoughts and dreams were wafted across the Channel to the industrious exile clearing his way through the great jungle of Arianism, in the Imperial Library of Paris.

Winter passed, and the early spring brought news to Mr. Jerningham. A noble Scottish kinsman had died, leaving him a handsome estate in Perthshire. It was necessary that he should visit this new acquisition, and make all arrangements for its due maintenance; but he was sorely averse from leaving Greenlands, and the simple household in which he had learned to be happy.

"I suppose I must go," he said; "Lord Pendarvoch was a confirmed miser, and I know

he kept the place in a most miserable condition. When I was last in the neighbourhood, many years ago, there was not a fence fit for a civilized country, or a boundary-wall that kept out his neighbour's cattle. Yes, I suppose I must go and take possession, and shake hands with my tacksmen, and establish my claim to be regarded as a scion of the true blood—though it comes to me zigzag fashion, through a female branch of the old house. My mother's mother was an aunt of the last lord."

Mr. Jerningham lapsed into reverie. It was early April; green buds already bursting in the old-fashioned garden, and a wealth of pear and plum-blossom, snowy white; but the rich red of the apple-trees not yet opened. Tulip and hyacinth, polyanthus and primrose, were bright in the borders; rich red wallflowers bloomed on the old wall; all the garden was gay with the fresh spring blossoms.

"Do you remember what you said about Switzerland, Helen?" Mr. Jerningham asked, abruptly, after rather a long silence.

"I remember saying a great deal about Switzerland."

"And of your desire to see that country?"

"Yes, indeed! but that is too bright a dream. Papa confesses that his book is the kind of book that never *is* finished. William Mure of Caldwell did not live to finish his book, you know, though the subject is a narrow one compared to the theme of my dear father's labours; and Müller's book was left unfinished. How can I ever hope to go to Switzerland, since I should care nothing for the most beautiful land unless papa was my fellow-traveller?"

"We will persuade your father to publish the first two volumes of his book some day, and then we can all start for Switzerland together. But in the meantime allow me to inquire if you have ever thought about Scotland?"

"I have read Sir Walter Scott's delightful stories."

"Of course," cried Mr. Jerningham, with un-

wonted vivacity; "and those charming romances have inspired you with an ardent desire to behold the scenes which they embellish—the land of mountain and of fell, the land of Macgregor and Ravenswood, of heart-broken Lucy Ashton and weird Meg Merrilies. Do not think of Switzerland till you have seen the Scottish highlands."

"But the snow!" urged Helen.

"Snow! In Scotland I will show you mountain-peaks upon which the snows have never melted since the days of the Bruce; and from those snow-clad hills you shall look down into no dazzling abyss of awful whiteness, but out upon the waste of waters, with all their changeful play of light and shade, and varying splendour of colour, and animated motion. In Switzerland, remember, you have no sea."

"But the ice-oceans—the glaciers?"

"Better in the descriptions of Berlepsch than in reality; and even he admits that they are dirty. Upon my honour, the highlands of Scotland are unsurpassable."

"And then?" inquired Helen, laughing. "Why this sudden enthusiasm for Scotland, Mr. Jerningham? Oh! I forgot; you are now a proprietor of the northern soil, and I suppose this is only a natural burst of proprietorial pride."

This accusation Mr. Jerningham disdained to answer.

"Helen!" he said, with mock solemnity, "has it never occurred to you that your father must require change of scene—some relief from the monotonous verdancy of sylvan Berkshire —some respite from those eternal spreading beeches which provoke from commonplace lips ever-recurring allusion to the hackneyed Tityrus? That you yourself have languished for bolder scenery—snow-clad mountain-top, and wide blue lake—I am well aware; but do you think our dear scholar does not also require that mental and physical refreshment which comes from the contemplation of unknown lands and the breathing of unfamiliar breezes; or, in two words, do you not think that a brief

spring holiday in the highlands would be of great advantage to my dear friend?"

The student came out of the porch in time to hear the conclusion of Mr. Jerningham's speech. The master of Greenlands and Helen de Bergerac had been strolling up and down the lawn in front of the cottage during this conversation.

"What are you talking about, Harold?" asked the Frenchman.

Helen was prompt to answer his question.

"Oh, papa, Mr. Jerningham has been saying that you must require change of air and scene, and that a trip to Scotland would do you wonderful good. And so I am sure it would."

"Yes, Theodore, I want you to go with me to Pendarvoch. The place itself is scarcely worth showing you, but the surrounding scenery is superb; and Helen informs me she languishes to behold the Scottish highlands."

"Oh, Mr. Jerningham!" cried Helen; "when did I ever say——"

"Not a minute ago. And you know the advantage to your father will be unspeakable."

"But my book?" urged the student.

"You will return to it with renewed vigour after your holiday. You told me only the other day that you had of late experienced a languor, a distaste for your work, which denoted physical weakness; and——"

"Oh, papa!" cried Helen, alarmed; "you do not confess these things to me! It is quite true; you have been looking tired lately. Nanon remarked it. Pray let us go to Scotland."

"Can you refuse her?" asked Mr. Jerningham.

"When did I ever refuse anything to this dear child?"

"And when did she ever ask anything that you should refuse? Come, Theodore, it is the first favour I have asked of you for a long time. I must go to Pendarvoch; and I cannot bear to leave this place, where I have been so happy, unless I can take those with me who have made the spot so dear."

To a woman of the world, the tone of these words, and the look which accompanied them, would have spoken volumes. To Helen they told nothing, except that Mr. Jerningham was sincerely attached to her father and herself. She had always thought of him as her father's devoted friend, and it seemed to her only natural that she should be included in that friendship. She liked Harold Jerningham better than she liked any one, except those two people who reigned side by side in her heart; and the line which divides the outer tokens of liking and loving is so narrow a demarcation, that Harold Jerningham might easily be betrayed into fond hopes that were without foundation. Her manner to this friend of her father's was all sweetness. His tender accents, his fond, admiring looks, she accepted as the natural gallantries of a man so much her senior. Her very innocence made her more dangerous than the most accomplished of coquettes. And at this notion of a trip to the Highlands she brightened and sparkled, and placed herself at once on Mr.

Jerningham's side. For so many reasons the plan was delightful to her. First and chiefest of such reasons, it promised to benefit her father; secondly, she had long known and rejoiced in the romances of the northern enchanter, and the very sound of Scottish names conjured a hundred visions of romance before her mind's eye; thirdly, there had come upon Greenlands, upon her garden, her poultry-yard, her books, her piano, the river, the woods—nay, over the very sky that arched the woods and river, a shadow of dulness from the hour of Eustace Thorburn's departure. The old places had lost their familiar charm—the old pursuits had become wearisome. She fancied that amidst new scenes she would be less likely to miss her old companion; and then, in the next breath, said to herself, "How *he* would have liked to see Scotland!"

A great deal of argument was required to convince Theodore de Bergerac that it could be for his benefit to uproot himself from the spot he so dearly loved in order to travel to re-

motest regions of the north. He had the Frenchman's natural horror of foreign countries; and having once niched himself at his nest at Greenlands, cared not to stir thence, how fair soever might be the distant lands he was invited to visit. The argument which at last prevailed was that urged by Helen's pleading face. *That* entreaty the tender father was powerless to resist.

"My darling, it must be as you wish," he said, and the rest was easy. Mr. Jerningham did not suffer the grass to grow under his feet. He was prompt to make all arrangements, and three days after the subject had been mooted, the travellers were on their northward way, speeding to Edinburgh by express.

They were to spend three days in Edinburgh, then onward by easy stages, "doing" all the lions in their way, to the village and castle of Pendarvoch, which lay half in Perthshire, half in Aberdeenshire.

CHAPTER XII.

NORTHWARD.

The travellers had not left Greenlands two days when Eustace Thorburn arrived there. He had finished his work in Paris a month sooner than he had expected to do so, and had been glad to hurry home, in order to complete his arrangements with an eminent publishing firm, who, after considerable hesitation, had agreed to publish his poem without hazard of capital on his part, though not without foreboding of loss on theirs.

M. de Bergerac had not forgotten to write to his secretary, announcing the Scottish expedition; but he had only written an hour before starting, and the letter and the secretary had crossed each other between Dover and Calais. Eustace came to Greenlands full of hopeful agitation. He had not forgotten the promise made

his uncle. He had not forgotten that he was pledged to make a full confession to his kind patron, and to accept his banishment, if need were. His Parisian exile had only deferred the evil hour; it must come now, and speedily; and the decree would be spoken, and he and Helen must in all likelihood part for ever. But in the meantime he would see her once more, and it was for this unspeakable blessing he languished. For the last night of his sojourn in Paris sleep had been impossible. He could think only of the delight to which he was hastening—to see her once again! His love had grown day by day, hour by hour, during these long months of absence. As the train ploughed onwards through dusty flats, as the steamer danced across the sunlit waters, this one traveller counted the miles, and calculated the moments until he should near the beloved spot where his idol dwelt.

He knew that his Uncle Dan would have been glad to see him, even for a brief exchange of greetings and shaking of hands; but

he could not bring himself to spend the half-hour that it must have cost him to call in Great Ormond-street. Swift as a hack-cab could take him, he rushed from station to station, was so lucky as to catch a fast train for Windsor, and entered the shady avenues of Greenlands within fourteen hours of his departure from Paris.

How fresh and verdant the spring landscape seemed to him!—the cowslips and bluebells, the hawthorn buds just beginning to whiten the old rugged trees, gummy chestnut husks scattering the ground, and from afar the rich odour of newly-opened lilacs.

"And to think that for its master this place has no charm!" he said to himself, wonderingly.

His heart beat fast as he opened the gate of the bailiff's garden. Here all things looked their brightest and prettiest. The birds were singing gaily in the porch. The deep voice of Hephæstus boomed from the hall, and the dog ran out to repel the intruder, but changed his

bass growl of menace into a noisy demonstration of delight at sight of the traveller.

Even this welcome Eustace was glad to receive. It seemed a good omen. The door stood wide open; he went into the hall, with the dog leaping and bounding about him as he went. No one appeared. There was no sound of voices in any of the rooms. He opened the drawing-room door softly, and went in, prepared to see Helen bending over her books at a table in the window. But Helen was not there, and the room looked cold and dreary. Never had he seen the books so primly arranged, the piano so carefully closed. No cheery blaze brightened the hearth, no flowers perfumed the atmosphere. His instinct told him that a change had fallen upon the pleasant home. He rang the bell, and a fresh country housemaid answered his summons.

"Lor' a mercy, sir, how you did startle me!" she said. "I a'most thought it was ghostes, which they do begin sometimes with ringin' o' the bells."

"Is your mistress away from home?" asked Eustace.

"Yes, sir, and master, too. They both be gone to Scotland for a month, or more. Didn't you get the letter as master sent you, sir? I heard him say as he'd wrote to tell you they was gone."

They had gone to Scotland! To find them absent from Greenlands was in itself a wonder to him; but it seemed to him a kind of miracle that they should have gone to Scotland, that country which he was bent upon exploring in his search for the scene of his mother's sorrows.

"What part of Scotland has your master gone to, Martha?" he asked the housemaid.

The girl shook her head despondently, and replied that she had not "heard tell." They were to travel with Mr. Jerningham, she believed. That gentleman had come into property in Scotland, and they were going to see it. This was the utmost she had "heard tell on."

With Mr. Jerningham! What should make

that gentleman Helen's travelling companion? A sudden pang of jealousy rent Eustace Thorburn's heart as he thought of such a companionship. What could have brought about this Scottish journey? Having possessed himself of Martha's slender stock of information on this point, Eustace went to the kitchen to question Nanon; but with little more success. The Frenchwoman was voluble, but she could tell him scarcely anything.

They were to visit many places, she said, but she knew not where. The names of those barbarous countries had slipped from her memory. It was far, very far; and they were to be absent a month. Oh, but it was dismal without that sweet young lady! Nanon had nursed her as a baby, and never before had they been so long asunder.

"For a month! It is frightful to think of it," shrieked Nanon. She invited Mr. Thorburn to rest and refresh himself—to dine, to sleep, to make the place his home as long as he pleased. M. de Bergerac had left instruc-

tions to that effect. But the disappointment had been too bitter. Eustace could not endure to remain an hour in the house which had been so dear to him, now that the goddess who had glorified it dwelt there no longer. He declared that he had particular business to do in London, and must return thither immediately. He was eager to arrange for the Scottish expedition which had been planned by himself and his uncle—eager to start for the country to which Helen was gone, as if he would thereby be nearer her.

Before bidding old Nanon good-day, he made a final effort to extort from her some information.

"Surely M. de Bergerac must have left you some written address," he said, "in the event of your having occasion to write to him?"

"No, sir; if I wanted to write, I was to give my letter to Mr. Jerningham's steward; that was all. They will be going from place to place, you see, sir. It is not one place they go to see, but many."

With this answer Eustace was compelled to

be satisfied. He could not push his curiosity so far as to go to Mr. Jerningham's steward, and ask him for his master's whereabouts. And again, what benefit could it have been to him to know where Helen had gone? He had no right to follow her.

He hastened back to London, and to Great Ormond Street, where he was doomed to wait three dreary hours, turning over his Uncle Dan's books, before that individual made his appearance, somewhat flushed from dining, and jovial of manner, but in nowise the worse for his dinner and wine.

"I have been dining in St. James's Street, with Joyce of the *Hermes*, and Farquhar of the *Zeus*," he said. "A thousand welcomes, dearest boy! And so you come straight from the station to find your faithful old Daniel? Such a token of affection touches this tough old heart."

"Not straight from the station, Uncle Dan," the young man answered, with a guilty air. "I have been down to Berkshire. M. de Ber-

gerac and his daughter have started for Scotland with Mr. Jerningham."

"What takes them to Scotland in such company?"

"Mr. Jerningham has just succeeded to an estate in the north; that is all I could discover from the servants at the cottage. This Scottish expedition must be quite a new idea, for there was no allusion to it in M. de Bergerac's last letter to me."

"Strange!"

"And now, Uncle Dan, I want you to keep your promise, and start for your Highland holiday with me."

"What! we are to rush post-haste for the Highlands, in search of your Helen?"

"No; on a more solemn search than that."

"Alas, poor lad! On that one subject you are madder than Prince Hamlet. Every one has his craze. But I pledged myself to be your companion, and I must keep my promise. You are really bent upon going over the ground on which that sad drama was enacted?"

"Fixed as fate, Uncle Dan."

"So be it. Your faithful kinsman has been at work in your absence, and has made things smooth for you."

"Is it possible, dear friend?"

"There's nothing a man of the world can't do when he's put to it. A reperusal of Dion's autobiography enabled me to identify the divine Carlitz of that narrative with a lady who took the town by storm when I was a young man, and who afterwards married a nobleman of eccentric repute. Once possessed of this clue, it was easy for me to identify her *fidus Achates*, the amiable H., as Mr. Elderton Hollis, a gentleman connected with dramatic affairs for the last quarter of a century, and still floating, gay and *débonnaire*, upon the border land of the theatrical world,—a gentleman with whom I myself have some acquaintance. To make a long story short, I contrived to throw myself in Hollis's way at the Quin Club; and after a glance at the theatrical horizon of to-day, drifted into the usual commonplaces about the

decay of dramatic talent. 'Where are our Fawcetts, our Nisbetts, our Keeleys, our Carlitzes?' I sighed; and at the last familiar name, the old fellow pricked up his ears, like a hound at the huntsman's 'Hark forward!'"

"'Ah, my dear Mayfield, that *was* a woman!' he exclaimed. 'You are, of course, aware that I was her secretary, her adviser, her treasurer,—I may say, her guardian angel,—before her brilliant marriage; and now, sir, she cuts me, though I give you my word of honour that marriage could never have taken place but for my management of her affairs."

"This bears out the autobiography," cried Eustace, eagerly.

"To the letter. I first sympathized with Mr. Hollis, and then pumped him. I found him somewhat reserved upon the subject of that northern expedition; but after some beating about the bush, I got from him the admission that the lady whom we will still call Carlitz was in Scotland just before her marriage with Lord V.; and by and by he let slip

that the spot was in the extreme north of Aberdeen. This much, and no more, could I obtain. Examination of a tourist's map showed me a headland called Halko's Head, in the north of Aberdeenshire. This is likely to be the H. H. of Dion's book, and thither we must direct our steps."

"My dear uncle, you have done wonders!"

"And when you find the place, what then?"

"I shall discover the name of the man."

"Who knows? The chase of the wild-goose is a sport congenial to youth; but April is a cold month in Scotland, and I wish the expedition could have been contrived later."

Eustace would fain have started next morning, had it been possible; but two days were necessary for Mr. Mayfield's literary affairs, and the agreement with the editors as to what contributions he was to send to the *Arcopagus* and another journal during his absence, and so on.

"I must scribble *en route*, you see, Eustace," he said; "the mill will not stop because I want a holiday."

CHAPTER XIII.

HALKO'S HEAD.

A SEVENTEEN hours' journey conveyed Mr. Mayfield and his nephew to the granite city of Aberdeen, with only a quarter of an hour's pause at Carlisle, where the travellers were turned out upon the platform at the chillest hour 'twixt night and morning, and tantalized by the sight of blazing fires in a luxurious waiting-room.

The travellers arrived at Aberdeen at noon, and devoted the remainder of that day and the next to the exploration of the city, dismantled cathedral, and sparse relics of the old town; the narrow street where, over a grocer's shop, still exist the rooms once inhabited by the boy Byron and his mother. They made an excursion to the old bridge of Don—an easy walk from the city—and loitered there for some

time, leaning on "Balgounie's brig's black wall," and talking of the poet whose one line has made it famous.

To Eustace every hour's delay was painful. He longed to push on to that remote point of the shire where Halko's stormy headland showed grim and gray against the broad blue sea. They had made all inquiries about this culminating point of their journey, and had been informed that Halko's Head was a very wild place, where there were but just a few fishermen's cottages, but where folks sometimes went in the summer for fishing and such-like. Railroad to Halko's Head there was none; but the rail would convey them about two-thirds of the way, and thence they could doubtless obtain some mode of conveyance.

"We can walk, if need be," said Eustace, cheerily; and to this Mr. Mayfield assented.

"Though 'tis somewhat long since I have distinguished myself as a pedestrian," he added, doubtfully.

"You can take your ease at your inn, Uncle

Dan, and spin copy for your ravening editors, while I push on to that place."

"Perhaps it would be best so, Eustace," answered Mr. Mayfield, thoughtfully.

He divined that the young man was anxious that his first visit to that scene should be made companionless. The memories connected with that spot were too sad for sympathy—too bitter for friendly commune.

After an evening which the indefatigable essayist, devoted to a review of a new translation of Juvenal for the *Areopagus*, and Eustace to meditations of the most sombre hue, they left Aberdeen at day-break next morning, and went on to a small station, which was their nearest point to Halko's Head.

This nearest point proved five-and-twenty miles distant from the fishing-village; but on inquiry the travellers discovered that there was a comfortable halting-place at a village or small town eighteen miles farther on, and only seven from the wild headland to which Eustace Thorburn's steps were bent.

Vehicles were not easily to be obtained at this remote station, and the travellers decided upon walking the eighteen miles at a leisurely pace, stopping to examine anything worth seeing which they might find on their route.

The day was bright and clear, and their road lay across the short turf of broad uplands overhanging the wide northern sea.

They reached the little town at set of sun, and found the chief inn a somewhat rude but not comfortless hostelry. Here they dined upon liberal Scottish fare, and sat long after their meal smoking by the wide hearth, where sea-coal and odorous pine-logs made a glorious fire.

Even his Uncle Dan's talk could not distract the younger man's thoughts from that one subject upon which he had of late pondered so deeply. Within seven miles lay the spot where his mother had lived and suffered, something less than a quarter of a century ago. All day he had been thinking of her. The wild scene on which he looked was the landscape over

which her sad eyes had wandered wearily, looking for some faint star of hope where hope was none. The waves of this northern sea had sounded the monotonous chorus of her melancholy thoughts.

"O mother!" he said to himself, "and of all your young day-dreams, your girlish sorrows, there were none which you dared speak of to the son you loved so dearly! Even this bitter penalty you had to pay—the penalty of a lifelong silence. For your grief there was no sympathy, for your memories no confidant."

He left the mountain-shanty quietly at daybreak next morning. Host and hostess were stirring, but Daniel was sleeping profoundly in his humble nest—a mere cupboard in the wall of the room where the travellers had dined. Eustace had occupied a similar cupboard, and was not sorry to exchange so stifling a couch for the fresh breath of the north wind blowing over the red mountains.

The path from Killalochie to Halko's Head

traversed a wild and picturesque country, high above the sea. Eustace looked down from the mountain-road, across the edge of precipitous cliffs, upon a broad sweep of sand—the sands on which his nameless father had walked full of fear on the night of his mother's disappearance. Before noon he entered the little village, if village it could be called, a straggling group of rude stone cottages, inhabited by fishermen, whose nets hung on the low granite walls, and lay on the stunted turf before the doors. Two or three cottages of a better class were to be seen on the outskirts of the little colony, but even these presented small attraction to the eye of the English traveller.

This was Halko's Head. Eustace questioned a rough fisher-boy before he could convince himself that he did indeed tread the scene of his mother's sad experiences—of his father's selfish perfidy.

For artist or poet the place had ample charm, but for the ordinary pleasure-seeker it would have appeared as barren as it was re-

mote. Wilder or less fertile landscape was not to be found in North Britain; and to this untravelled wanderer the rough fishermen and brawny fisherwives seemed as strange as the inhabitants of Central Africa.

How was he to find the house in which his mother had lived, the people who had known her, after the lapse of four-and-twenty years? This was a question which he had not asked himself until this moment, when he stood a stranger amongst that scanty population, upon the headland he had come to explore.

He walked about the little place, descended a steep flight of steps cut in the cliff, which he identified as the Devil's Staircase of Dion's narrative; walked about half a mile along the sands, and then saw, glimmering in the sunlight, high above him, the little white temple, where his mother had so often sat alone and pensive, looking out at the barren sea.

From the sands where he was walking, this classic summer-house was inaccessible; but Eustace had no doubt of its identity with the

temple described by Dion. How such an elegant affectation as this classic edifice should exist among those barren moorlands, peopled only by grouse and ptarmigan, was in itself an enigma, and one which Eustace was anxious to solve.

As the temple was unapproachable from the sands, the traveller was fain to retrace his steps to the Devil's Staircase, and thence to the village. Here he found a humble place of entertainment, where he asked for such refreshments as the house could afford him, in order that he might use the privileges of a customer in the way of asking questions. A healthy-looking matron, past middle life, neatly clad in linsey petticoat and cotton bedgown, with snow-white muslin headgear and brawny bare feet, brought him his meal, and with her he began at once to converse, though the worthy dame's dialect sorely puzzled him, and but for his familiarity with the immortal romancer, would most probably have baffled him altogether.

Happily, his intimate acquaintance with the

Gregoragh, and the Dougal Creature, his long-standing friendship for Caleb Balderstone and Douce Davie Deans, with many others of the same immortal family, enabled him to comprehend the greater part of the guidwife's discourse, though he had occasional difficulty in making himself intelligible to her.

The gist of the conversation may be summed-up thus. Did gentlefolks from the south ever come to Halko's Head? Yes, some, but not many. There were but three houses suitable to such folks—Widow Macfarlane's, the cottage beyond the Devil's Staircase; Mistress Ramsay's on the Killalochie road; and a shooting-box of Lord Pendarvoch's. But this latter had been suffered to fall into decay many years ago. It had been shut up for the last quarter of a century, except now and then, when my lord had lent it to one of his friends that came for the shootings. All the shootings round about, farther than you could see, belonged to Lord Pendarvoch. But he was just dead, poor old body! and little loss to any mortal

creature, for he had been nothing better than a miser since his young days, when he was wild and wasteful enough, if folks spoke true. That "wee bit stone hoosie" on the cliff had been put there by my lord, who brought the stone "posties" from foreign parts.

Here was the mystery of the classic temple fully explained. Eustace knew very little of the peers of the realm, and Lord Pendarvoch was to him only as other lords—an unfamiliar name.

"You have lived here many years, I suppose?" he said to the hostess.

She told him with a pleasant grin, that she had never lived anywhere else. That pure mountain air she had breathed all her life. On Halko's Head her eyes had first opened.

On this Eustace proceeded to question her closely as to her recollections of any strangers who had made their abode at the fishing-village about four-and-twenty years before. He described the young couple—a gentleman and lady—"bride and bridegroom," he said, with a faint blush.

After much questioning from Eustace, and profound consideration upon the worthy dame's part, a glimmer of light broke in upon her memory.

"Was it at Lord Pendarvoch's they lived?" she asked.

"That I cannot tell you. But since you say there are only three houses suitable to strangers of superior condition, I suppose it was at one of those three the lady and gentleman had lived. They were here some months. The lady was very young, very pretty. She left suddenly, and the gentleman followed her a few days afterwards."

"Ay, ay, puir thing! I mind her the noo!" exclaimed the woman, nodding her head sympathetically.

After this she told Eustace how such a couple as he described—the lady "as bonny a lass as ye'd see for mony a lang mile"—had lived for some months at Lord Pendarvoch's shooting-box; and how the lady had been very sad and gentle, and much neglected towards

the last by the gentleman, until she ran away one day, in a fit of jealousy, as it was thought, because the gentleman had been seen riding and driving with a strange foreign woman from London: and the gentleman had thought she'd drowned herself, and had been well-nigh mad for a night and a day, till news came that quieted him, and then he went away.

This much—full confirmation of Dion's story—the woman could tell Eustace; but no more. The name of these southern strangers she had never heard, or, having heard, had utterly forgotten. Of their condition, whence they came, and how they had obtained license to occupy Lord Pendarvoch's house, she was equally ignorant. Nor could she direct Eustace to any inhabitant of the village likely to know more than herself. There had not been for years any care taken of the shooting-box. Lord Pendarvoch was just dead. His old steward had died six years before, and a new man from the south—"folks were all for southrons noo"—had succeeded to his post.

Pendarvoch Castle was a day's journey off, on the other side of the county.

To obtain further information seemed hopeless; but Eustace was determined to leave no stone unturned. Why should he not go to Pendarvoch Castle before he left Scotland, see the old servants?—for old servants there must be in a large household, whatever changes time and death might have brought about in four-and-twenty years. Some one there might be who would remember to whom Lord Pendarvoch had lent his house in that particular year. It was at least a chance, and Eustace resolved upon trying it.

He questioned his hostess as to the way back to Killalochie. She told him that there were two ways, one by the sands at low tide, the shorter of the two, since there was an inlet of the sea between Halko's Head and Killalochie, which was dry at low tide. It was a place that strangers went to see, the dame told Eustace, because of a cavern dug in the face of the cliff, that a saint lived in once upon a time

—"joost a wee bit cavey," the good woman called it.

Eustace thanked his hostess for her civility, paid her liberally for his humble refreshment, and bade her good-day, after inquiring his way to the disused abode of Lord Pendarvoch.

This dwelling he found easily enough. It was built in a hollow of the cliff, about a quarter of a mile from the village, midway between the fishermen's cottages and the classic temple. The house was small, but built in the Gothic style, and with some attempt at the picturesque. "Decay's effacing fingers," however, had done their worst. The stucco had peeled off wherever there was stucco to peel; the stone was stained with damp, and disfigured with patches of moss; the woodwork rotted for want of an occasional coat of paint. A scanty grove of firs sheltered the house on its seaward side, and tossed their dark branches drearily in the spring breeze, as Eustace opened the rusty iron gate and entered the small domain. No element of desolation

was wanting to the dreary picture. A bony goat cropped the stunted grass pensively, but fled at sound of the intruder's footfall.

No barrier defended the deserted dwelling. Eustace walked round the house, and peered in at the casements, whereof the shutters gaped open, as if their fastenings had rusted and dropped off with the progress of time. Within the traveller saw scanty furniture of a remote era, white with dust. He pulled the rusty handle of a bell, and a discordant jangle sounded in the distant offices; but he had no hope of finding any inmate. The abode bore upon its front an unmistakeable stamp of abandonment.

After pulling the jangling bell a second time, Eustace tried one of the windows. Half a dozen broken panes gaped wide, as if in invitation to the burglar's hand. He unhasped the sash, pushed open the spurious Gothic window, and went in. The room in which he found himself had once been gaily decorated; but little except the tawdry traces of vanished colour and tarnished gilding remained in evi-

lence of its former splendour. The furniture was battered and worn, and of the scantiest description. Lank, empty book-cases of painted and gilded wood stood in the recesses of the fire-place. He tried to picture his father and mother seated together in that dreary room; his mother watching by that dilapidated casement. The room might have been bright enough five-and-twenty years ago.

On the same floor there was another room, with less evidence of departed decoration; above there were four bed-chambers, and here the furniture was piled pell-mell, as in a lumber-room. The view from the windows was sublimity itself, and Eustace did not wonder that a Scottish nobleman should have chosen to build himself a nest on so picturesque a spot.

He walked slowly through the rooms, wondering where *her* aching head had lain, where *her* sad heart had stifled its griefs, where *her* penitent knees had bent to the Heaven her sin had offended. To tread these floors which she had trodden, to look from these windows whence she

had gazed, seemed to him worth the journey the barren privilege had cost him.

He lingered in the dusty rooms for some time, thinking of that one sad inhabitant whose presence had made the house sacred to him as the holy dwelling of Loretto to faithful pilgrims, and then softly and slowly departed, pausing only to gather a few sprigs of sweet-brier that grew in a sheltered corner of the neglected garden. With these in his breast he went back to the road leading to Killalochie, and bent his steps towards that humble settlement. He looked at his watch as he regained the road. It was three o'clock, and by six he could be with his uncle, who would scarcely care to dine until that hour.

"I can take him to that house to-morrow," he said to himself, "if he would like to see it. And I dare say it would be a mournful pleasure to him to see the rooms, as it has been to me. It is like looking at a grave."

CHAPTER XIV.

HOPELESS.

Between Killalochie and Halko's Head the road was of the loneliest. On his morning journey Eustace Thorburn had encountered about three people, sturdy mountaineers, who gave him friendly greeting as they passed him. For the first few miles of his return he met no one; and when he seated himself to rest on a rough block of stone near the junction of two roads, the wide expanse of land and sea which the spot commanded was as solitary as if he had been the first man, and the world newly-created for his habitation.

It is not to be supposed that even on this day every thought of Helen de Bergerac had been banished from the wanderer's mind. He had too long and too habitually indulged him-

self with tender memories of the pleasant hours they had spent together. Thoughts of her were interwoven with all other thoughts and all other memories.

Upon that lonely road he had found ample leisure for meditation; and now, as he sat alone amidst the solitary grandeur of that mountain district, it was of Helen and of the future he thought. Nor were his meditations hopeful. Alone, nameless, his task well-nigh finished for the one kindly patron whom fortune had sent him, with nothing but a manuscript poem and a publisher's half-promise between him and poverty, was he a fitting suitor for Theodore de Bergerac's only daughter? By what right could he demand her father's confidence? What promise could he make? what hopes advance? None. To sum up his best claim, his brightest aspiration, would be only to say, "Sometimes, when the demon of self-doubt ceases for the moment to torment me, I believe I am a poet. Of my chances of winning the world to believe as

much, I know nothing. Assured income in the present or expectation in the future, I have none."

He considered his position with a gloomy hopelessness that was almost despair. What could he do but despair? He knew that his patron liked him; nay, indeed, had honoured him with a warm regard; but would that regard stand him in good stead should he presume to offer himself as a husband for his patron's only daughter? Mr. Jerningham's influence would, he knew, be exercised against him, since, for some mysterious reason, that gentleman had chosen to regard him with a malignant eye. And he knew that Mr. Jerningham's counsel would not be disregarded by his old friend.

"No; there is no ray of hope on the dark horizon of my life," thought the young man. "Better for me that I should never see Helen again."

The sound of carriage-wheels startled him from his reverie. He looked up, and saw a

landau and pair approaching him by the cross-road. The apparition of such an equipage in that rugged district surprised him. He stood up and looked at the advancing carriage, and in the same moment recognized its occupants.

They were M. de Bergerac, his daughter, and Mr. Jerningham.

The Frenchman was quick to recognize his secretary.

"*Holà!* Stop, then!" he cried to the coachman; and then to Eustace, "Come hither, young wanderer. To see the ghost of the Chevalier—your hapless Charles Edward—standing by that stone, would not more have surprised me. Jump in, then. There is no objection to his taking the fourth place, I suppose, Harold?"

Mr. Jerningham bowed, with an air which implied that, upon a subject so utterly indifferent to him as the secretary's movements, he could have no opinion but that of his friend.

"Why, how bewildered you look, Eustace!" exclaimed M. de Bergerac, as the young man

took his place in the carriage with the manner of a sleep-walker. "And yet you must have expected to see us. You followed me down here with your papers. What foolish devotion! —Tell your man to drive on, Harold."

Eustace had recovered himself a little by this time, and had shaken hands with Helen, whose too expressive face betrayed an emotion no less profound than his own. Nor were those eloquent glances lost upon Mr. Jerningham, who watched the young people closely, from beneath thoughtful brows.

"And so you thought your French documents worth a pilgrimage to Scotland?" said M. de Bergerac.

"No, indeed, sir. This meeting is only a happy accident for me. I knew you were in Scotland. They told me as much in Greenlands; but they could tell me no more."

"But in that case, what brings you here?" cried the Frenchman.

"I am here with my uncle—on business."

"On business!" exclaimed M. de Bergerac, looking at his secretary, in amazement.

Harold Jerningham also regarded the young man, with a new sharpness of scrutiny.

"On business!" repeated M. de Bergerac. "But what business could possibly bring you into these remote wilds?—to the utmost limits of your civilization."

"Perhaps it can scarcely be called business," replied Eustace. "It would be nearer the mark to call it a voyage of discovery. I came from Paris when my work was done, and found Greenlands deserted. My time was my own, awaiting your return. My uncle and I had a fancy for a holiday, and we came here."

"It is, at least, a remarkable coincidence."

"Very remarkable," said Mr. Jerningham, with a suspicious look.

He was not inclined to regard the meeting as a coincidence. The young adventurer had, no doubt, been informed as to their whereabouts, and had followed them. And yet of their *precise* whereabouts he could not have been in-

formed, for beyond the border of Aberdeenshire neither Mr. Jerningham's steward nor any one else had been apprised of their movements.

"Unless there were secret communications between Helen and him," thought Harold Jerningham. And this seemed utterly impossible. To suspect Helen—to suspect the girl whom he had learned to adore as the very type of all feminine excellence, the incarnate ideal of womanly innocence! Great heaven, to discover deceit *there!*

"It would be a fitting end to my career," he thought, bitterly.

"Your uncle is travelling with you, then?" said M. de Bergerac.

"Yes; he is now at the inn yonder, at Killalochie, where I must rejoin him; so I must ask you not to take me too far off the right road."

"But is it imperative that you rejoin him to-day? Do you think I am not eager to question you about the work you have done for me in Paris? Can you not dine with us? Mr. Jerningham will, I know, be charmed to have

you." That gentleman bowed an icy assent. "Can't you spare us this evening?"

To refuse this invitation Eustace Thorburn must have been something more than mortal. Happily for his honour he had told his uncle that it was just possible he might find his explorations at Halko's Head too much for one day's work, and might sleep at that village. He was thus free.

"We dine and sleep at a village ten miles from here," said M. de Bergerac. "The people of the inn can give you a bed, no doubt; and you can get back to Killalochie to-morrow."

Eustace accepted the invitation, and was then favoured with some account of his employer's wanderings.

"We have rested nowhere, but have seen everything worth seeing between the Tweed and these mountains," said M. de Bergerac. "I begin to think that Jerningham is the original Wandering Jew. He knows everything, every trace of Pictish camp, and every relic of the early convents, from St. Columba to St. Mar-

garet. There is a cave on this coast which we are to see before we leave the neighbourhood; a cave cut in the face of the cliff, with outer and inner chamber, in which one of the Scottish saints spent the evening of his pious days, among the sea-gulls."

"Yes; I heard of that cave at Halko's Head," said Eustace.

"You have been to Halko's Head?" asked Mr. Jerningham.

"I was returning from that place when your carriage picked me up."

"Why do we not go to Halko's Head, if it is worth seeing?" asked M. de Bergerac.

"It is not worth seeing. A mere handful of fishermen's cottages, on a craggy headland;" replied Mr. Jerningham.

"And yet Mr. Thorburn goes there?"

"I cannot help Mr. Thorburn's bad taste; but we can drive to Halko's Head to-morrow, if you please. I told you, when we came into this part of the country, that there was little calculated to interest any one but a sportsman."

"But I was determined to see Aberdeenshire," replied M. de Bergerac, with playful insistence. "Why not Aberdeenshire? Why should we explore all other shires of Scotland, and neglect Aberdeenshire? I had read of the Cairn-gorm mountains, and wanted to behold them."

"You know Halko's Head, Mr. Jerningham?" said Eustace, thoughtfully.

"I know every inch of Scotland."

"Did you know Halko's Head four-and-twenty years ago?"

For some reason the question startled Harold Jerningham more than he was wont to be moved for any insignificant cause.

"No," he answered, shortly. "But what motive had you for such a question?"

"I want to find some one who knew that place four-and-twenty years ago."

"Why?"

"Because a person very dear to me was living there at that time."

"An insufficient reason for such curiosity

about the place, I should think," replied Mr. Jerningham, coldly. "But you are a poet, Mr. Thorburn, and are not bound by the laws of reason."

Helen interposed here, and began to question Eustace about his Parisian experiences. She had felt that Mr. Jerningham's tone was unfriendly, and was eager to turn the current of the conversation.

The two young people talked together during the rest of the drive, and Mr. Jerningham listened and looked on. He had fancied himself gaining ground rapidly during this northern tour; and now it seemed to him all at once as if he had gained no ground, as if he were no nearer to the one dear object of his desires. What delight these two seemed to find in their frivolous discourse! To listen and look on,—was that to be his lot for the rest of his weary days?

"O God, am I an old man?" he asked himself, with passionate self-abasement.

The consciousness that his days of hope and pride are over,—the wretched revelation that

for him there are to be no more roses, no more spring-time, no more of the brightness and glory of life,—will come upon a man suddenly like this, in brief, bitter gusts, like the breath of an east wind blowing in the face of mid-summer.

M. de Bergerac had watched his old friend and his daughter with pleasure during this Scottish tour. It seemed to him also as if Harold Jerningham was gaining ground, and it pleased him that it should be so. To him the master of Greenlands appeared no ineligible suitor, for of the darker side of his friend's life and character he knew nothing.

The ten miles' drive upon a very indifferent road, uphill and downhill, occupied more than wo hours, and it was seven o'clock when the carriage entered the little town where the travellers were to dine. At the inn all was prepared for them. They dined in a room commanding a noble view of the sea, and having a half-glass door which opened on a rude kind of terrace-walk.

Here M. de Bergerac and his secretary strolled after dinner, talking of Oriental manuscripts in the spring moonlight, while Harold Jerningham and Helen played chess, upon a little board which the travellers carried, in the room within.

"And when we return to Greenlands, which we are to do in a week, shall I find you at your post?" asked M. de Bergerac, kindly. "A great deal of work remains to be done before my first two volumes will be ready for publication. Jerningham strongly recommends my publishing the first two volumes as soon as they are ready. We shall have plenty to do in giving them the final polish. Much that I have now in the form of notes must be interwoven with the text. The frivolous reader recoils from small type. You are not tired of your work, I hope?"

On this Eustace spoke. He felt that the time had come, and that he dare not longer keep silence.

"Tired of my work! Oh, if you knew how

delightful my service has been to me!" he exclaimed; and then in the next breath added, "but I fear I shall never again inhabit Greenlands."

And then he made full confession of his offence. He told how this mad folly had grown upon him in the happy days of the previous year.

"I was counting my chances as you drove up to me to-day," he said, "little thinking I was so soon to see your daughter's sweet face. I was fighting with despair as I sat by the mountain-road. Speak plainly, dear sir, you cannot say harder things to me than I have said to myself."

"Why should I say anything hard? It is no sin to love my daughter. I ought to have known that it was impossible to live near her, and refrain from loving her. But do not talk to me of despair. What is a young man's love but a fancy which is blown to the end of the earth by the first blast of Fame's mighty trumpet. My dear young friend, I am not afraid

that you will break your heart, or, at least, that the heart-break will kill you. I broke my heart at your age. It is an affair of six weeks; and for a poet a broken heart is inspiration."

"Oh, sir, for God's sake, do not trifle with me!"

"My dear friend, I am telling you the truth. I thank you for your candour, and in return will be as candid. I admire and love you, almost as I could have loved a son. If you could give my daughter a secure position—a safe and certain home, however unpretending—I would be the last to oppose your suit. But you cannot do this. You are young, hopeful, ambitious. The world—as your poet says—is your oyster, which with your sword you'll open. But the oyster is sometimes impenetrable. I have seen the brightest swords blunted. I am an old man and an exile; my sole possession in the form of *rentes viagères*. You would promise my child a home in the future. I cannot wait for the future. I am an old man, and I must see my darling provided with a safe shelter

before I die, so that, when death crosses my threshold, I may be able to say, 'Welcome, inevitable guest. The play is finished. *Vale et plaudite.*"

"God grant you may live to see your grandchildren's children."

"I will not gainsay your prayer. But when it is a question of grandchildren, a man is bound to be doubly circumspect. What is the meaning of an imprudent marriage, of which the world talks so lightly? It is not my daughter only whom I doom to care and poverty, but how many unborn innocents do I devote to misfortune? Forgive me if, upon this subject, I seem hard and worldly. I would do much to prove my regard for you; but my child's future is the one thing that I cannot afford to hazard."

"You are all goodness, sir," replied Eustace, with the gentle gravity of resignation. "I scarcely hoped for a more favourable sentence."

He said no more. He had, indeed, cherished

little hope ; but the agony of this utter despair was none the less acute. M. de Bergerac compassionated this natural sorrow, and was conscious that he was in some wise to blame for having brought the two young people together.

"If she, too, should suffer!" he thought. "I have seen her interest in this young man—her regret when he left us. Great heaven! how am I to choose wisely for the child I love so well?"

He looked to the window of the room where Harold Jerningham and Helen sat together in the dim light of two candles. The man's patrician face and the girl's fresh young beauty made a charming picture. M. de Bergerac had no sense of incongruity in the union of these two. The accomplishments and graces of middle age harmonized well with the innocent beauty of youth, and it seemed to him a fitting thing that these two should marry.

"Not for worlds would I sacrifice her to a father's ambition," he said to himself; "but to see her mistress of Greenlands, to know

that her life would be sheltered from all the storms of fate, would comfort me in the hour of parting."

Eustace bade his patron good-night presently, making some lame excuse for not returning to the sitting-room. In vain did the kindly Frenchman essay to comfort him in this bitter hour.

"I thank you a thousand times for your goodness to me on this and every other occasion," the young man said, as they shook hands. "Believe me, I am grateful. I shall be proud and happy to go on working for you in London, if you will allow me; but I cannot return to Greenlands—I cannot see your daughter again."

"No, it is better not. Ah, if you only knew how short-lived these sorrows are!"

"I cannot believe that mine will be short-lived. But I do not want to complain. Once more, good night, and God bless you! I shall leave this place at daybreak to-morrow."

"And when shall you return to London?"

"That will rest with my uncle. I will write to you at Greenlands directly I do return. Good night, sir."

"Good night, and God bless you!"

Thus they parted. Eustace did not go back to the house immediately, but wandered out into the little town, and thence to the open country, where he indulged his grief in solitude. It was late when he went back to the inn, and made his way stealthily to the humble garret-chamber which had been allotted to him.

Here he lay, sleepless, till the cock's hoarse crow blent shrilly with the thunderous roll of the waves. At the first faint streak of daylight he rose, dressed, and went softly down stairs, where he found a bare-footed servant-girl opening the doors of the house. By one of these open doors he departed unobserved, while the bare-footed damsel was sweeping in some mysterious locality which she called "Ben." The morning was dull and drizzling; but what recks despair of such small inconveniences? The young man set out on his lonely walk,

breakfastless and hopeless, scarce knowing where his steps led him.

After walking about a mile, he took the trouble to inquire his whereabouts from the first person he encountered, who informed him that he was fifteen miles from Killalochie, and fourteen from Halko's Head.

On this he determined to walk to Halko's Head. He wanted to see that place once more, and to visit the little classic temple on the cliff, which on the previous day he had omitted to examine. He was in no humour for even his uncle's society, and dreaded a return to the little inn at Killalochie, where genial Dan would question him about his adventures, and where he must perhaps reveal his disappointment, if that could be called a disappointment which had annihilated so frail a hope.

"A day's solitude will do me good," he thought, as he turned his face towards Halko's Head. "I can get back to Killalochie by nightfall, before my uncle can alarm himself about my absence."

The walk occupied some hours, and when the traveller entered the little fishing village nature asserted itself in spite of despair, and he was fain to order breakfast at the humble hostelry where he had lunched the day before.

The same woman waited upon him: she was the mistress of the house, and again he questioned her about the lady and gentleman who occupied Lord Pendarvoch's house four-and-twenty years ago; but she could tell him no more to-day than yesterday. No new facts had returned to her memory during the interval.

As Eustace Thorburn sat alone after this unprofitable conversation, the first anguish of despair yielded to the sweet whispers of hope. Was his case indeed utterly hopeless? M. de Bergerac asked security for the future. That he could not now offer; but if his poem should win recognition, the pathway of literary success would be opened to him, and on his industry and perseverance alone would depend his speedy achievement of a secure position in the world

of letters. Such an income as his Uncle Daniel earned with ease, and squandered with even greater facility, would support a home which M. de Bergerac's simple taste would not despise.

"Why should I not win her as fair a home as she has at Greenlands," he said, "and if she loves me she will wait. Ah, if I had only seen her, if I had but told her how devotedly she is loved!"

And then he reproached himself for his precipitancy. In his desire to act honourably, he had played too much the part of a little boy who asks a boon of his schoolmaster. He had at least the right to plead his own cause with Helen de Bergerac.

He told himself that if his poem should be a success, he could go to Greenlands once more to entreat permission to speak to his divinity. Armed with the talisman of success, he could ask as much. And then he thought of Helen's youth. What might he not achieve in a few years? He remembered what his uncle had

said to him—"If her love is worth winning, she will wait."

He took a manuscript volume from his pocket, and turned the leaves thoughtfully. It was the fair copy of his *magnum opus*, which he had brought with him on this journey for leisurely revision, but on which he had as yet worked little. From these manuscript pages he tried to obtain comfort. If the world would only listen! He measured his strength against the minor poets of his day. Surely there was something in these verses that should win him a place among the younger singers.

He left the inn by and by, and walked slowly along the cliff to the little classic temple. The April day had brightened, and the sun shone upon the waves, though there were ugly black clouds to windward.

The temple on the cliff could tell him nothing. But it was the scene of his mother's loneliest hours, and he contemplated it with a tender interest. The mountain weeds—such wild flowers as flourish in the breath of the sea, had

clustered thickly round the bases of the slim Ionian pillars; gray moss and lichen defaced the marble, white as it looked from the distance. Eustace seated himself on the crumbling stone bench, and lingered for some time, looking out over the sea, and thinking now of his mother, now of Helen de Bergerac, anon of that unknown father whose sin had made him nameless.

From this long reverie he was disturbed by the soft thud of hoofs upon the short turf, and looking landwards, he saw a horseman trotting towards the temple. Within a few yards of the spot he dismounted, and came to the temple, leading his horse. Before this Eustace had recognized Mr. Jerningham, the man who had surprised him reading *The Disappointments of Dion*, the man who bore some resemblance to himself, and must therefore resemble his father—the man who, by a series of coincidences, seemed involved in that mystery of the past which he was so eager to penetrate.

If Mr. Jerningham's appearance here was surprising to Eustace, the presence of Eustace at this spot seemed no less astounding to Mr. Jerningham.

"They told me you had returned to Killalochie," he said.

"No; I wanted to see this place before I left this part of Scotland."

"I cannot imagine what interest you can possibly have in a spot so remote."

"The interest of association," Eustace answered. "But have I not as much reason to wonder what should bring you here, Mr. Jerningham?"

"That question is easily answered. A proprietor is generally anxious to examine his newly acquired possessions. This summer-house comes to me with the rest of my kinsman Pendarvoch's property."

"Lord Pendarvoch was related to you!" exclaimed Eustace.

"He was."

"Strange!"

"What is there so strange in such a relationship?"

"Nothing strange except to me. It is only one more in a sequence of coincidences which concern me alone. I came to this part of Scotland to discover a secret of the past, Mr. Jerningham, and perhaps you can help me to penetrate that mystery. Four-and-twenty years ago, Lord Pendarvoch lent his shooting-box yonder to a gentleman whose name I want to know. Can you tell me if I shall find any old servant at Pendarvoch likely to be able to answer this question for me, or do you yourself know enough of your kinsman's friends at that period, as to be able to give me the information I seek."

To these inquiries Mr. Jerningham had listened gravely, with his face somewhat averted from the speaker.

"No," he replied, coldly, "I knew very few of Pendarvoch's friends. I cannot help you to identify the person who may have borrowed his house a quarter of a century ago. Every man

makes a *tabula rasa* of his memory half a dozen times within such a period. Existence would be unbearable if our memories were so well as you seem to suppose they do. As to my cousin's old servants, they are all dead or imbecile. If you want information, you may spare yourself the trouble of going to Pendarvoch, and question these marble columns. They will tell you as much as the Pendarvoch servants."

"Do not think me obstinate if I put that to the test. I have determined not to leave a stone unturned."

"I cannot understand your eagerness to pry into the secrets of the past. I begin to fancy you are hunting some lost estate—perhaps plotting to dispossess me."

"No, Mr. Jerningham, it is not an estate I am hunting; it is a lost name."

"You appear to delight in enigmas. I do not."

"I will not bore you with any further talk of my affairs. And this temple is yours, Mr.

Jerningham. I may never see it again. Forgive me if I ask you not to pull it down. Let it stand. For me it is sacred as a tomb."

Harold Jerningham stared aghast at the speaker. A question rose to his lips, but his voice failed him, and it remained unspoken. He stood pale, breathless, watching the young man as he bent his knee upon one of the steps of the temple, and gathered a handful of the wild flowers that clustered about the stone.

"Your friends and I are to dine at Killalochie," he said, presently, while Eustace's head was still bent over the flowers; "we both return by the same road, I suppose?"

"I think not; the tide is low, and I have set my heart upon going back by the sands."

"Do you think it quite safe to venture?"

"I should imagine so. At Halko's Head they told me the way was safe at low tide."

"But are you sure the tide is on the ebb?"

"It looks like it."

"I would warn you to be cautious. The tide upon this part of the coast is dangerous, at least I have heard people say as much."

"I am not afraid," answered Eustace, with some touch of bitterness. "A man whose life is hardly worth keeping may defy fortune."

"Life at five-and-twenty is always worth keeping. Take my advice, Mr. Thorburn, and ask advice from the fisher-folk before you set out on your walk."

"Thanks; you are very good; I will take your advice. And M. de Bergerac and his daughter are to dine at the Killalochie Inn, where I am pledged to rejoin my uncle to-day. I did not think I should see them again before I left Scotland."

After this, Eustace Thorburn bade Mr. Jerningham good morning, and departed in the direction of that rough flight of steps known as "The Devil's Staircase." Harold Jerningham tied his horse's bridle to one of the marble columns, and paced to and fro upon the short grass, darkly meditative.

"What does it mean?" he asked himself, "this young man's appearance at this spot—his searching inquiries about the people who occupied Pendarvoch's house four-and-twenty years ago? The very time! A spot so remote, so rarely visited—a house so seldom inhabited! Can he be any relation of—*hers?* A nephew, perhaps. And yet, is that likely? Her father and mother died more than twenty years ago. Who should have set this man upon the track? And he gathered those wild flowers, and put them in his breast, with the air of a man whose associations with the spot were of the closest and most tender. And in Berkshire I came upon him reading *that* book—that wretched record of heartlessness and folly. Yes, it is the spot. When I last stood here I was young and beloved. I, who now hang upon the looks of a girl less lovely than she who gave me a kind of worship. Nothing that I possess, nothing that I can do, will win me such a love as that I spurned. O God! the bitterness of late remorse! I let her go,

broken-hearted, and I know not how long she lived or how she died. I cannot think a creature so tender could long survive sorrow and ignominy, such as I made her suffer. Here we have sat side by side, and I have grown weary of her company. If she could arise before me now—pale, faded, in rags—I would fall upon my knees before her, and claim her as my redeeming angel. 'Welcome back, sweet spirit!' I would cry. 'In all these years I have sought for happiness, and found none so pure and perfect as that you offered me. In all these years I have sought the love of women, and have never been loved as you loved me.'"

Alas! that the dead cannot return! To her whose fate had been so dreary, what warm welcome, what atoning tears, might have been given if she could have come to claim them! A cold gust of wind swept along the cliff as Mr. Jerningham invoked the departed spirit. It seemed to him like a breath from the grave.

"She is dead," he said to himself; "I call her in vain."

He, too, stooped to gather a few of the yellow hill-flowers, and put them in his breast. Then, after one long, mournful look at the deserted summer-house, he mounted his horse, and rode slowly to the dilapidated shooting-box which had come to him with the rest of his kinsman's estate. At the gate of this humble domain he dismounted again, and left his horse cropping the rank grass in the neglected garden, while he made his way into the house, very much after the manner in which Eustace Thorburn had penetrated it upon the previous day.

He walked quickly through the rooms, and left the house hurriedly. To him the gloom of the dust-whitened chambers was almost intolerable.

"Why do I grope among dry bones and dead men's skulls?" he asked himself. "Can any man afford to retrace his steps over the ground he trod in his youth? Shall I, above all men, dare the phantoms of the Past?"

He mounted his horse, and rode away without a glance behind him, as if he had, indeed,

encountered some ghostly presence in that empty dwelling-place.

"I will have it rased to the ground next week," he said to himself. "Why should it stand for ever as a monument of my faults and follies? And that young man, de Bergerac's *protégé*, entreated me to spare the summer-house yonder, because it is sacred to him! To him? What should make it sacred in his eyes? What connexion can he have with *that* dark story! And they say he is like me—indeed, I have myself perceived the resemblance. I will question him closely to-night at Killalochie."

At Halko's Head Mr. Jerningham stopped to refresh his horse, and ordered refreshment for himself, for the benefit of the humble hostelry where he stopped. Here he dawdled away an hour and a half very drearily, for the repose of his steed. The weather had changed for the worse when he emerged from the little inn. Ominous black clouds obscured the horizon, and a shrill east wind whistled across the

barren hills. Looking seaward from the lofty headland, Mr. Jerningham saw that the tide had risen considerably since he had last looked at the sands.

"When did the tide turn, my man?" he asked, of the lad who brought him his horse.

"Above two hours ago, sir."

"Two hours ago! It was turning then when Thorburn went down to the sands," thought Mr. Jerningham. And then he again questioned the boy: "I suppose any one setting off by the sands for Killalochie at turn of tide would get there safely?" he asked.

The boy shook his head with a doubtful grin.

"I dinna ken, sir. Folks fra' Halko's Head mun start when the tide wants an hour o' turning, if they'd get to Killalochie dry-shod."

"Great heaven!" cried Harold Jerningham, "and that young man is a stranger to the coast."

He left his horse in the care of the lad, and went to consult a little group of idle fishermen congregated before one of the cottages. From

these men he received the most dismal confirmation of his fears. The walk from Halko's Head to Killalochie could not be done between the turning of the tide and its full. Between the two places there was no way of getting from the sands to the cliffs, or only points so perilous and difficult of ascent, as to be impossible to any but the hardiest samphire-gatherer, or boldest hunter of eaglets, bred on those rough coasts. What was just possible for a Highland fisherman, would be, of course, impossible to a literary Londoner.

"Do you tell me that the distance cannot be walked in the time?" asked Mr. Jerningham, desperately.

The answer was decisive. Captain Barclay himself could not have walked from Halko's Head to Killalochie within the given period. The hardiest of these villagers were careful, at this time of year, to start an hour before the turn of the tide. The more cautious among these good folks left Halko's Head as soon as the ebbing waves left a dry path upon the sand.

"Then he is doomed!" Mr. Jerningham said to himself. "But what is his doom to me? I am not his keeper."

He did his uttermost, however, towards the rescue of the unwary pedestrian from the peril he had tempted. To the fishermen he offered a noble reward should they succeed in saving the imprudent stranger. The men ran to their boats, and in five minutes had pushed off, and were making all the way they could against a heavy sea. But those who stayed behind told Mr. Jerningham that the chances were against the boats overtaking the pedestrian, if he were anything of a walker. They told him there was a stiff wind blowing from the land, and it was as much as the rowers could do to make any way against it. This, indeed, he could see for himself, and those dark clouds in the windward quarter boded ill. Mr. Jerningham lingered for some time, talking with the two men who had stayed on shore. He questioned them closely as to the measures to be taken for the rescue of the stranger; and

they assured him that in sending the boats he had done all that mortal aid could do.

With this assurance he was obliged to be satisfied. What could it matter to him whether Eustace Thorburn lived or died; or would not the young man's untimely end be for his advantage? He had seen, the day before, only too plainly, that all his patient devotion, his watchful anxiety to please her, had not made him as dear to Helen de Bergerac as this hired secretary had become without an effort. And all the old envy, and the old anger had returned to Harold Jerningham's breast as he made this discovery.

"Will she lament his death?" he asked himself, "or is her love for him only a girlish fancy, that will perish with its object. She seemed tolerably happy in his absence, and I hoped she had completely forgotten him, and was learning to love me. Why should I not win her love? And he comes back, and in the first moment of his return I discover that I have been building on sand. The divine attraction of youth is with my rival, and all my

dreams and all my hopes are so much foolishness and self-delusion."

This is what Mr. Jerningham thought as he rode across the barren hills towards Killalochie, whither he went as fast as his horse could carry him, but not faster than the dark storm-clouds which overtook him half-way, and drenched him with heavy rain. The sky grew black as Erebus, and looking seaward every now and then, he saw the breakers leap and whiten as they rolled in.

That common humanity which prompts a man to help his direst foe in extreme peril, made Mr. Jerningham eager to reach Killalochie. There, perhaps, he might find he had been deceived by the gloomy presages of the fishermen, or thence he might send other means to help the missing traveller. He rode up to the little inn an hour after leaving Halko's Head. M. de Bergerac and his daughter had arrived some time before, and Mr. Jerningham was informed that dinner would be served immediately.

"Put it off for a quarter of an hour," he said to the servant, "and do not let my friend or his daughter know of my arrival. I want to see the landlord on most urgent business."

The landlord was in the bar, talking to a portly, middle-aged gentleman, who was lounging against an angle of the wall, smoking a cigar.

"I really wish my nephew were safe in this house," said this person, "for I think we are in for a rough night."

Mr. Jerningham told the landlord of his fears, and asked whether the walk from Halko's Head to Killalochie by the sands were indeed as perilous as it had been represented by the fisherman.

The landlord confirmed all he had heard.

"Is there anything to be done?" cried Mr. Jerningham; "a gentleman, whom I met at Halko's Head, set out to walk here at the turn of the tide. I sent boats after him, but the men seemed to fear the result."

"From Halko's Head," exclaimed the lounger, taking his cigar from his mouth, and staring aghast at Harold Jerningham. "I expect my nephew from Halko's Head. Do you know the name of the man you met there?"

"He is my friend's secretary, Mr. Thorburn."

"O God," cried Daniel, "it's my boy!"

For a few moments he leant against the wall, helpless, and white as death. In the next instant he called upon them hoarsely to help him, to follow him, and ran bare-headed from the house.

"Who is that man?" asked Mr. Jerningham.

"He's fra the south, sir; Mayfield by name."

"Mayfield!" muttered the questioner. "Of *her* blood."

Daniel Mayfield came back to the inn. "Is no one going to help me?" he cried. "Are you going to let my sister's son perish, and not stir a foot to save him?"

The landlord caught Daniel's strong arm in his own muscular grip.

"You joost keep y'rsel quiet," he said. "It's no guid to fash y'rsel. Whatever mon can dee, I'll dee. It is'na runnin' wild in the street as'll save y'r nevy. I ken the place, and I ken what to be doin'. Leave it to me."

"Yes," said Mr. Jerningham, huskily; "you can do nothing. Let the good man manage things his own way. And mind, my friend, I will guarantee fifty pounds to the man who saves Eustace Thorburn. I want to speak to you, Mr. Mayfield. Come in here." He opened the door of a little sitting-room, and would have led Daniel in; but Daniel shook off his grasp roughly.

"Do you think I can talk of anything while *his* life is in peril?" he cried.

"Yes, you can—you must talk of *him*. I tell you that your help is not wanted. You can do nothing. The men, who know the coast, will do their utmost. Come! I must and will be answered."

He half led, half dragged, Daniel Mayfield into the little room. The journalist was much

the stronger man of the two, but at this moment he was helpless as a child.

"Your name is Mayfield? You do not know what feelings *that* name awakens in my mind, heard in this place, and after my meeting that young man where I did meet him this morning. For God's sake tell me if you are in any way related to a Mr. Mayfield who——"

"My father kept a circulating library at Bayham," answered Daniel, with angry abruptness. "I am a journalist, and get my bread by scribbling for newspapers and reviews."

"And that young man—Eustace Thorburn—is your sister's son? You must have had more than one sister?"

"No, I had but one."

"And she is dead?"

"She is."

"And this young man—Eustace Thorburn—is the son of your sister, Mrs. Thorburn?"

"He is the son of my only sister, Celia Mayfield."

"His father—Mr. Thorburn—is dead, I suppose?"

"I can answer no questions about his father," answered Daniel, sternly; "nor do I care to be catechized in this manner at such a time."

"Pardon me. Your name has painful associations for me, and I thought it possible you might be related to——— One question more, and I have done. In what year was your nephew born?"

"He was born on the 14th November, 1844."

"Then he is not twenty-four years of age. You are quite sure of the date?"

"I am; and if you care to verify it, you may find the registry of his baptism in St. Ann's Church, Soho."

"Thanks. That is all I have to ask. Forgive me if I seem impertinent. And now let us go to the jetty together; and God grant this young man may come back to us in safety."

Daniel uttered no pious aspiration. There are terrors too profound for words—periods of

anguish in which a man cannot even pray. He followed Harold Jerningham out of the house, both men pale as death, and with an awful quiet fallen upon them. They went silently down to the little wooden jetty where the fishing boats were moored.

The tide was at the flood, the rain driving against their pale, awe-stricken faces, the waters leaping and plunging against the timbers of the jetty. Nothing could be more hopeless than the out-look.

The landlord of the inn was there. He had sent off a boat's crew in search of the missing stranger.

"How do we know that he has not returned by some other way?" asked Mr. Jerningham; while Daniel Mayfield stood, statue-like, staring seaward.

The men pointed significantly to the perpendicular cliffs on each side of the jetty. The only cleft in these grim barriers, for miles along the coast, was that opening in which the little harbour and jetty had been made. Only by this way could the traveller have approached

the village, and no traveller had come this way since the turning of the tide. This was the gist of what the men told Harold Jerningham, in cautious undertones, while Daniel Mayfield still stood, statue-like and unlistening, staring out at the roaring waste of waves.

There the two men waited for upwards of an hour. The rain fell throughout that dreary interval. Mr. Jerningham paced slowly to and fro the little jetty. He could scarcely have recalled another occasion upon which he had exposed himself thus to the assaults of those persistent levellers the elements, but he was barely conscious of the rain that drifted in his face, and drenched his garments. The greatest mental shock that had ever befallen this man had come upon him to-day. A revelation the most startling had been made to him : and with that strange revealment bitter regret, vain remorse, had taken possession of his mind. He had borne himself with sufficient calmness in his interview with Daniel Mayfield, but the tempest within was not easily to be stilled. As

he paced the jetty, he tried to reason with himself, to take a calm survey of the day's events, but he tried in vain. All his thoughts travelled in a circle, and perpetually returned to the same point.

"I have a son," he said to himself; and then, with a sudden shudder, and a glance of horror towards the pitiless sea, he told himself, "I *had* a son."

While he walked thus to and fro, oblivious alike of Daniel Mayfield and of the patient, lounging fishermen, Daniel came suddenly to him, and laid a strong hand upon his shoulder.

"Where is my nephew?" he asked. "Where is my only sister's only child? You saw him at Halko's Head this morning, and parted from him there. Why did you let him return by the perilous route, while you travelled safely?"

"I did not know the danger of the road. I took prompt measures enough when I discovered the hazard. I sent two boats from Halko's

Head, in search of your nephew. Please God, he may return in one of them!"

"Amen!" cried Daniel, solemnly; and then, for the first time, he seemed to awake from the stupor that had come upon him with the dread horror of his kinsman's peril. He began to question the men closely as to the distance between the two places, and the time in which the boats might be expected to make the voyage. By the showing of the fishermen, the boats were already due.

After these questions and calculations, the watchers relapsed into silence. Daniel still stood looking seaward, but no longer with the blank stare of stupefaction. He watched the waves now with eagerness—nay, even with hope.

The night closed in, cold, wet, and stormy, while he watched; and by and by, through the thick darkness, and above the roar of the waves, came the voices of the boatmen, calling to the men on the jetty.

One of these men had lighted a lantern, and swung it aloft to a mast, at the end of the rough

landing-place. By the red glimmer of this light Daniel Mayfield saw the boats coming in, and the faces of the men looking upward, but no face he knew. The wonder is that humanity can survive such anguish. He called to the men hoarsely—

"Is he found?"

"No."

Short phrases best fit such announcements.

"There is the boat that set out from here," murmured Mr. Jerningham; "he may be picked up by that."

"Not if these have failed to find him. These men had the start by an hour and a half, and have come close along the shore. Oh, damnable, ravenous waves, roar your loudest for evermore, and overwhelm this miserable earth!—You have swallowed up my boy!"

He fell on his kness, and beat his forehead against the rough timber rail of the jetty. In broad daylight he would, perhaps, have shown himself a stoic; but in the darkness, and amidst

the thunder of the stormy sea, he abandoned himself to his despair.

Nor did Mr. Jerningham attempt to console him. To him also the return of the boats had brought despair, but he betrayed his grief by no passionate word or gesture.

"I had a son," he said to himself; "a son borne to me by the only woman who ever loved me with completely pure and disinterested love; and I never looked upon his infant sleep; I never shared his boyish confidence; and I met him in the pride of his manhood and hated him because he was bright, and young, hopeful, and like myself at my best. And I put myself between him and the girl who loved him,—I, his father,—and tried to steal her heart away from him. O God! to think of his uncherished childhood, his uncared-for boyhood, his friendless manhood! My only son! And I have squandered thousands on old coins, I have locked up the cost of half a dozen university educations in doubtful intaglios. My son! made after my own image—my very

self—the reproduction of my youth at its brightest—the incarnation of my hopes and dreams when they were purest! O Celia! this is the vengeance which Fate exacts for the wrongs of the forgiving. Here, on this dreary shore, which that poor girl fled from in her despair—here, after four-and-twenty years, the hour of retribution sounds, and the penalty is exacted!"

Thus ran Harold Jerningham's thoughts as he waited for the return of the boat that was still away on its vain, desperate errand. It came back too soon, a lantern at the prow gleaming bright through the rainy darkness. No, the men had found no one—no trace of the missing wanderer.

"What if he went back to Halko's Head by the sands, and is kept there by stress of weather?" cried Daniel, suddenly; "there is that one chance left. O God! it is but a chance. What vehicle can I get to take me to that place? I must go at once!"

"There is the horse I rode this morning,"

said Mr. Jerningham. "I will go to Halko's Head."

"Why should you do my duty?" asked Daniel, angrily. "Do you think I am afraid of a strange road or a shower of rain, when I have to go in search of my dead sister's son?"

To this Mr. Jerningham made no reply. He would fain have gone himself to the fishing village on the headland, to see if, by any happy chance, Eustace had returned thither. But he, Harold Jerningham, had no right to put himself forward in this search. Acknowledged tie between him and the missing man there was none. He could only submit to the natural desire of Daniel Mayfield.

Upon inquiry, it appeared that the landlord of the "William Wallace" inn possessed a vehicle, which he spoke of vaguely, as a "wee bit giggy," and which, with the sturdy steed that drew it, was very much at the service of Mr. Mayfield. A hanger-on of the inn could drive the gentleman to Halko's Head, and would guarantee his safe conduct thither, and safe return to

Killalochie, despite of the darkness and foul weather.

Daniel was only too glad to accept the offer, and in ten minutes the gig—a lumbering, obsolete vehicle of the hooded species, on two gigantic wheels—was ready for departure. The driver clambered into his seat, Daniel followed, and the big, bony horse, and clumsy carriage went splashing and plunging through the night.

Mr. Jerningham stood at the inn-door, watching its departure. Then, for the first time since his arrival at the humble hostelry, he thought of the dinner that had been prepared for him, and the friends with whom he was to have eaten it.

He went up to the sitting-room, where he found Helen alone, waiting the return of her father, who had gone down to the harbour. She sat in a meditative attitude, anxious and dispirited. Some hint of the ghastly truth had reached this room, in spite of Mr. Jerningham's precautions, and Theodore de Bergerac had

gone out to ascertain the extent of the calamity.

"Oh, I am so glad you have come!" cried Helen, eagerly, as he entered the room. "You can tell us the truth about this dreadful rumour. The people here say that there has been some one—a stranger—lost on the sands to-night. Is it true?"

"My dear Helen, I——" Mr. Jerningham began, but the girl stopped him, with a faint shriek of horror.

"Yes, it is true," she cried; "your face tells me that. It is deadly white. Is there no hope? Is the traveller really lost?"

"It would be too soon to suppose that," answered Mr. Jerningham, with calmness that cost him no small effort. "The whole business may be only a false alarm. The young man may have chosen another path. After all, no one *saw* him go down to the sands. There is no cause for despair."

M. de Bergerac came into the room at this moment. He, too, was ghastly pale.

"This is dreadful, Jerningham," he said. "There is every reason to fear this poor young fellow has been drowned. I have been talking to the men on the jetty—men who know every foot of the coast—and they tell me, if he went by the sands, there is no hope. Poor fellow!"

"Papa, in what a tone you speak of him!" cried Helen. "It is natural you should be sorry for a stranger, but you speak as if you had known this young man—and there are so few travellers in this part of Scotland. Oh, for pity's sake, tell me!" she exclaimed, looking piteously from one to the other, with clasped hands. "Did you know him? did we know him? Your secretary was in this neighbourhood yesterday, papa, and was to meet his uncle here at Killalochie. Oh, no, no, no! it cannot be him. It cannot be Eustace Thorburn!"

"Dear child, for God's sake restrain yourself. There is no certainty—there is always hope until the worst is known."

"It *is* Eustace Thorburn," cried Helen. "Neither of you will deny that."

A stifled shriek broke from her lips, and she fell senseless, stretched at the feet of her father and Harold Jerningham.

"How she loves him!" murmured Mr. Jerningham, as he bent over her, and assisted her father in carrying her to the adjoining room. "So ends my dream!"

At midnight the lumbering, hooded gig returned with Daniel Mayfield—and despair. He had been into every dwelling-place at Halko's Head, had roused drowsy fishermen from their beds, but no trace or tidings of Eustace Thorburn had reached that lonely village. He came back when all possible means of finding the lost had been exhausted.

Mr. Jerningham was up, and watching for him. More than this had he done. He had hired a couple of men, provided with lanterns, who were ready in the inn, prepared to accompany Harold Jerningham and Daniel Mayfield on an exploration of the coast, for the tide was

now out. The rain had ceased, and faint stars glimmered here and there on the cloudy sky.

"Will you go down to the sands with these men and me?" asked Mr. Jerningham, when Daniel had described his bootless errand.

To this proposal Daniel assented, almost mechanically. In his utter despair he had ceased to wonder why Harold Jerningham should take so keen an interest in his nephew's peril. He was glad to do anything—he knew not, cared not what. That seemed like action. But since his useless journey to Halko's Head hope had left him.

They went down to the sands and wandered there for hours, examining every turn and angle of the rugged cliff that towered above them, dark and gloomy as the wall of some fortress-prison. The exploration only strengthened their despair. Against that iron-bound coast how many a helpless wretch must have been crushed to death! Between the swift advancing wall of waters, and that perpendi-

cular boundary what was there for the traveller but a grave! They pored upon the sand, lighted by the fitful glare of the lanterns, looking for some trace of the lost—a handkerchief, a glove, a purse, a scrap of paper—but they found no such token.

Harold Jerningham remembered the yellow wild flowers which the young man had put in his breast. With those poor memorials of his mother's youth he had gone to his untimely death.

"If the superstitions of priests have any foundation, and my son and I shall meet before the judgment-throne, surely I shall see those wild flowers in his hand," thought Mr. Jerningham, as he remembered the last look of the bright young face which had been said to resemble his own.

He thought also of such a night as this four-and-twenty years ago, when he had searched the same coast, with terror in his mind. Then his fears had been wasted. Oh, that it might be so now!

They paced the dreary sands until daybreak, and for an hour after daybreak; and by that time the tide was rolling in again, and they had to hasten back to the little harbour. As the fierce waves dashed shorewards with a hoarse roar, each of the explorers thought how the missing traveller had been thus overtaken by the same devouring monsters, savagely bent upon destruction to mankind. In that hour Daniel Mayfield conceived a detestation of the sea—a horror and hatred of those black, rolling waves, as ministers of death and desolation, deadliest foes to human weakness and human love.

With daybreak, and the beginning of a new day, came a despair even more terrible than that of the long, dark night. Blank and chill was the dawn of that miserable day. All had been done. Human love, human effort, could do no more, except to repeat again and again the same plan of action that had proved so hopeless.

If Eustace Thorburn had taken that fatal

path under the cliffs, he had inevitably gone to his death. Of that the people who knew the coast said there could be no doubt. If he had changed his mind at the last moment, and set off in some other direction, why did he not return to Killalochie? Was it likely that he, at all times so thoughtful of others, would show himself on this occasion utterly indifferent to his uncle's feelings, reckless what anxiety he caused him?

Upon that dreary day there was nothing but watching and waiting for the little party at the "William Wallace" inn. Helen and her father sat alone in their room, the girl pale as marble, but very calm, and with a sweet resignation of manner, which seemed to indicate her regret for that outbreak of passionate sorrow on the previous night. Little was said between the father and daughter, but Theodore de Bergerac's affection showed itself on this bitter day by a supreme tenderness of tone and manner. Once only did they speak of the subject that filled the minds of both.

"My darling," said Theodore, "it is too soon to abandon hope."

"Oh, papa! I cannot hope, but I have prayed. All through the long night I prayed for my old companion and friend. You think I have no right to be so sorry for him. You do not know how good he was to me all the time we were together. No brother could have been kinder to a favourite sister."

"And you shall weep for him and pray for him, as you would for a brother," answered the father, tenderly, "with grief as pure, with prayers as holy. Happy the man who has such an intercessor!"

After this they sat in pensive silence, unconscious of the progress of time, but with the feeling that the day was prolonged to infinite duration. It was like the day of a funeral; and yet, a lurking sense of tremulous expectancy fluttered the hearts of those silent mourners. A step on the stair, the sudden sound of voices at the inn-door, threw Helen into a fever. Sometimes she half rose from

her chair, pale, breathless, listening. The cry almost broke from her lips, "He is here!" But the footstep passed by—the voice that for the moment sounded familiar grew strange—and she knew that her hopes had deluded her. It is so difficult for youth not to hope. The waves could not have devoured so much genius, so much goodness. Even pitiless ocean must needs be too merciful to destroy Eustace Thorburn. Some such thought as this lurked in Helen's mind.

While Theodore de Bergerac and his daughter sat alone, absorbed in this one bitter anxiety, Daniel Mayfield wandered helplessly to and fro between the "William Wallace" and the harbour, or the road to Halko's Head—now going one way, now another, but continually returning to the inn-door, to ask, with a countenance that was piteous in its assumed tranquillity, if anything had been heard of the missing man.

The answer was always the same—nothing had been heard. The landlord, and some of the hangers-on of the inn, tried to comfort

Daniel with feeble suggestions as to what the young man might have done with himself. Others made no attempt to hide their gloomy convictions.

"It isn't the first time a stranger has lost his life on those sands," they said, in their northern patois. "Folks that have gone to see St. Kentigern's Cave, and would go without a guide, have paid dearly for their folly."

Daniel Mayfield scarcely heard this remark about the cave. The fears, or indeed the certainties, of these people could scarcely be darker than his own. He told himself that he should never look upon his nephew's living face again.

"Dead I may see him—the dear, bright face beaten and bruised against those hellish cliffs; but living, never more; oh, never more! my more than son—my pride—my hope—my love!"

And then he remembered how he had hoped to hold his nephew's children in his arms. He had almost felt the soft, clinging hands upon his neck.

"I was created to end my days as old Uncle Dan," he had said to himself.

Now the day-dream was gone. This brighter life, in which he had found it so easy to renew his own youth, was broken off untimely—this dear companionship, which had made him a boy, was taken from him. Down to dusty death he must tramp alone, between a lane of printer's devils clamorous for copy, and insatiable editors for ever demanding that each denunciatory leader, or scathing review, or Juvenalistic onslaught on the social vices of his day, should be racier and more trenchant than the last.

His nephew taken from him, there remained to Daniel nothing but tavern friends, and the dull round of daily labour, and old age, cheerless, lonely, creeping towards him apace, athwart the dust and turmoil of his life.

While Daniel walked, purposeless, on the dreary road, or stood listless, and hopeless, on the quiet jetty, Harold Jerningham sat alone in his own apartment, and pondered on the events that had befallen him.

A son, found and lost—found only in the very hour of his loss. What chastisement of offended God—or blind, unconscious destiny, gigantic Nemesis, with mighty, brazen arms, revolving, machine-like, on its pivot, striking at random into space, and striking *sometimes* strangely to the purpose—what chastisement could have seemed more fitting than this ?

"I would have bartered half my fortune, or twenty years of my life, for a son," he said to himself. "How often I have envied the field-labourer his troop of rosy brats—the gipsy tramp her brown-faced baby ! Fate put a barren sceptre in my hand. If my wife had given me a son, I think I should have loved her. And I had a son all the time—a son whom I might have legitimated, since his mother lived as my acknowledged wife on this Scottish ground. Yes, I would have set the lawyers to work, and we would have made him heir of Greenlands, and Ripley, and Pendarvoch. I would have given him the girl who loves him —whom I have loved. It would be no shame

to resign her to my son—my younger, better self. And we met—that unknown son and I—and we held scornfully aloof from each other, with instinctive dislike. Dislike? It was dislike which needed but a word to melt into love. In a stranger, this reflection of my youth was an impertinence—a plagiarism. In my son it must be the strongest claim upon my love. My son! It needs not the agreement of dates to confirm his kindred. His paternity is written upon his face."

And then to Mr. Jerningham also there came the thought that had come to Daniel Mayfield. That face in life he was never more to see. Should he even look upon it in death—changed, disfigured by the fierce destruction of the waves. Even to see it thus was almost too much to hope. To reclaim the dead, so lost, would be well nigh as impossible as it had been to save the living.

CHAPTER XV.

STRONGER THAN DEATH.

The day that followed was even more utterly blank and hopeless than the last. Mr. Jerningham had sent scouts in every direction, and both from him and Daniel the men had received promises of liberal reward for any tidings of the lost one. But no tidings came. The men returned, dispirited and weary; and at the close of this second blank, wasted day, fairly confessed that they could do no more.

So the night closed; and the sleepless hours wore away in a house of mourning and desolation.

During these two days Mr. Jerningham and Helen de Bergerac had not met. The girl had retired when her father's friend entered the sitting-room which they shared in common.

She shrank from seeing him after that moment of anguish in which she had betrayed that secret which, of all others, she would most jealously have guarded. She now avoided Mr. Jerningham, and he guessed the reason of her avoidance. Nor did her father attempt to conceal the truth.

"You were wiser than I, dear friend," he said, "when you warned me against the peril of that young man's residence in our home. Only the night before his unhappy disappearance he made a confession of his love for my darling, and pleaded his cause with me, with all possible humility, and with very little hope of acceptance, I am sure."

"And you rejected his suit?"

"What else could I do? In the first place I considered myself pledged to you. I had no brighter hope than that you should win my daughter's love, and I believed her heart to be free. In the second place this young man—for whom I have a real affection—could offer no security for my dear girl's happiness, except his love; and at my age one has outlived the

idea that true love will pay rent and taxes, and butcher and baker. No, I gave Eustace a point-blank refusal, and he left me broken-hearted."

"Did Helen know of his appeal to you?"

"Not a syllable. Nor did I imagine until the other night that he had made so fatal an impression on her mind. I see now that it is so, and fear that his untimely doom will only render the impression more lasting."

"Yes," replied Mr. Jerningham, gravely; "that is a thing to be dreaded. My dear friend, do not think of *my* disappointment, though I will own to you without shame that it is a bitter one. The dream was so bright. Let us think only of this dear girl's happiness, or if that cannot be secured, her peace of mind. Would it not be wise to remove her from this scene as soon as possible?"

"Decidedly; she broods perpetually upon that poor young man's fate, and is kept in a fever of expectation by the hope of tidings which I fear will never come. Yes, it would certainly be better to take her away."

"That is easily done. You can take her to Pendarvoch. We are expected there, you know. I will remain here a day or two longer, for the last feeble chance of the missing man's reappearance, and will then follow you. We are only fifty miles from Pendarvoch, and you can manage the journey easily with one change of horses. Shall I order the carriage for to-morrow morning?"

"If you please. I will talk to Helen about the arrangement. I do not think she can object."

"If she does, you must do your utmost to overrule her objections. Be sure that it is of vital consequence to remove her from this scene of gloom and terror. Believe me, I am influenced by no selfish motive when I ask you to take her to Pendarvoch. If that young man should be restored to us, I will bring him there to her. He shall plead to you again, and this time shall not be rejected."

"Harold!"

"Yes, you think me mad, no doubt. For

my own part, I can only wonder that I am not mad. I tell you, if Eustace Thorburn comes forth from the jaws of death, he shall come to you a new creature—with new hopes, new ambitions—perhaps even a new name. Oh, for pity's sake do not question me. Wait till we know the issue of this hideous uncertainty."

"My dear Harold, you astound me. I thought you disliked my secretary, and you speak of him with emotion that seems foreign to your very nature. The change is most extraordinary."

"The circumstances that have brought about the change are not ordinary circumstances. I say again, for God's sake do not question me. Prepare Helen for the journey. I will go and give the necessary orders. Good night!"

The two men shook hands, and Harold Jerningham departed, leaving his old friend sorely perplexed by his conduct.

"What a heart that man conceals under an affectation of cynicism!" thought Theodore de Bergerac. "He is immeasurably distressed

by the untimely fate of a man whom he pretended to dislike."

M. de Bergerac called his daughter from the adjoining room. She came to him, deadly pale, but with the sweet air of resignation that made her beauty so pathetic.

"My darling," said her father, tenderly, "Mr. Jerningham wishes us to leave this sad place, early to-morrow morning, for Pendarvoch, where we are hourly expected. He will remain here some days longer, in the hope of obtaining some tidings about poor Eustace; but he wishes us to leave immediately. You have no objection to this arrangement, have you, dearest?"

"I had rather we stayed here, papa."

"But, my dear girl, what good can you and I do here?"

"None, oh, none! But I had much rather we stayed."

"My child, it is so useless."

"Oh, papa, I know that," she answered, piteously. "I know we can do nothing, except pray for him, and I do pray for him

without ceasing; but to go away—to abandon the place where he has been lost—it seems so cruel, so cowardly."

"But, my darling! the place will not be abandoned. Mr. Jerningham will remain here, and will omit no effort to discover our poor friend's fate. His uncle, Mr. Mayfield, will be here. What could we do that they will not do better?

"I know that, dear father! I know we can do nothing. But let me stay. I loved him so dearly!"

The words slipped from her lips unawares, and she stood before her father, blushing crimson.

"Oh, papa! you must think me so bold and unwomanly," she said. "Till this sorrow came upon us I did not know that I loved him. I did not know how dear he had become to me in the happy, tranquil days at home. When he left us, I felt there was a blank in my life, somehow, except when I was with you. But I thought no more than this. It was only when I heard that he was lost to us for ever that I knew how truly I loved him."

"And he loved you, darling, as truly and as fondly!" answered the father, hiding the blushing face upon his breast.

"Did he tell you that, papa?"

"He did. The night before he started on that fatal excursion. And now, dearest girl! be brave, and let me take you from this place, where your presence can do no possible good."

"I will, dear father—if you will first grant me one favour."

"What is that?"

"Let me see the place where he perished. Take me to the sands along which he was to come, and upon which he must have met his death."

"My darling! what good can that do?"

"Oh, none, perhaps," cried Helen, impatiently; "but it is just the one thing that can reconcile me to leaving this place. If he had died a natural death, and been buried among the quiet dead, I should ask you to take me to his grave, and you could not refuse.

I ask you almost the same thing now. Let me look upon the scene of his death!"

"It shall be so, Helen," replied Theodore, gravely, "though I fear I shall do wrong in yielding to such a wish."

"My darling father! Then you will go with me to the sands to-morrow at low tide? You will inquire the time at which we ought to go?"

"I will do anything foolish for your sake! But, Helen, when I have done this you will go with me to Pendarvoch quietly?"

"You shall take me where you please."

Later in the evening M. de Bergerac saw Harold Jerningham, ascertained the hour of the turning tide, and arranged the counter-ordering of the carriage. At noon, they told him, the tide would be within an hour of turning, and any ordinary walker, starting for Halko's Head at that time, might arrive there with ease and safety.

"Helen and I want to see the coast with our own eyes," said M. de Bergerac, anxious to

shield his daughter's weakness in some measure by affecting to share her wish; "so before we leave this place we have determined to explore the way by which that poor fellow must have come."

"Helen!—Will she go with you?"

"Why not? She, too, would like to see this fatal coast."

"A strange fancy."

"It may be wiser to indulge it."

"Be it so. But the distance to Halko's Head by the coast is seven miles. Helen can hardly walk so far."

"I think on this occasion she could do so."

"I will go with you, and we will take a boat in which she can complete the journey, should she feel tired."

At noon next day they started—Helen, her father, and Harold Jerningham—attended by a couple of rowers, in a roomy boat. Helen would have infinitely preferred to be alone with her father, but she could not advance any objection to Mr. Jerningham's companionship,

and was indeed grateful to him for not opposing her wish.

She walked by her father in silence, with her hand clinging to his arm, and her eyes lifted every now and then to the steep cliffs above them, unsurmountable, eternal barrier, between the sands and the heights above. The day was bright and clear, and the April sunlight shone upon a tranquil sea. Darkness and rain, storm and wind, had overtaken that missing traveller—against him the very elements had conspired.

The little party went slowly along the sands, with the boat always in sight. Little satisfaction could there be in that melancholy survey. The cliffs and the shore told nothing of him who had perished amidst their awful solitude. At what spot the rising wall of waters had overtaken him, no one could tell. Midway between Killalochie and Halko's Head they came to the inlet, or cleft in the cliffs, a narrow passage or chasm, between steep walls of crag, about a quarter of a mile in length. Here the

walking was difficult, and Harold Jerningham endeavoured to dissuade Helen from exploring the place.

"Mr. Mayfield and I went down there with our lanterns," he said. "Believe me, there has been no trace, not the faintest indication overlooked. The ground is so thickly scattered with sharp craggy stones as to be almost impassable."

In spite of this, Helen persisted, with a quiet resolution, which impressed Mr. Jerningham. This pure, country-bred girl was even more admirable than he had thought her. The calm, still face, so fixed and yet so gentle, assumed a new beauty in his eyes.

"The good blood shows itself," he thought.

They all three went into the chasm. Only in the red fitful glare of the lanterns had Mr. Jerningham seen it before. It had seemed to him then more vast, more awful; but even by day the depth and solitude of the place had a gloomy solemnity. Very carefully had the searchers, with their lanterns, examined every angle and recess of the cliff on either side,

every inch of the stony ground, looking for some trace of the lost, and had found nothing. To-day Mr. Jerningham walked listlessly, scarce looking to the right or the left, hoping nothing, fearing nothing.

M. de Bergerac's thoughts were absorbed by his daughter. It was her face he watched, her grief he feared. Thus was it left to the eyes of that one mourner to catch the first sign of hope. A loud cry burst from her lips, a cry that thrilled the hearts of her companions.

"Helen, my love, what is it?" exclaimed her father, clasping her tightly in his arms.

She broke from him, and pointed upwards. "Look!" she cried, "look! There is some one there. He is there! Alive or dead, he is found!"

They looked upwards in the direction to which she pointed, and there, fluttering in the fresh April wind, they saw something—a rag—a white handkerchief—hanging from the dark mouth of a hollow in the cliff.

This hollow in the cliff was about twelve feet

above the sand, and at first sight appeared utterly inaccessible.

"He is there!" cried Helen; "I am sure he is there!"

"Yes," said Mr. Jerningham, examining the face of the cliff; "there are niches cut here for foothold. Why, this must be the Saint's Cave of which they have told us. Yes, finding himself overtaken by the tide, he *might* have taken refuge here. It is just possible he might clamber to that opening."

"I know he was distinguished as a gymnast in Belgium," said M. de Bergerac, eagerly.

"I will run back and fetch the boatmen," said Mr. Jerningham; "they are waiting for us yonder."

He pointed to the opening in the cliff, and hastened thither.

"Holà!" shouted Theodore, "art thou up yonder, dear boy?"

Helen fell on her knees among the rough stones and wet seaweed.

"Oh! merciful Father, restore him to us!"

she cried, with clasped hands. "Hear our prayers, oh, Giver of all good things; and give him back to us."

Her father watched her with tearful eyes. "My darling," he said, raising her in his arms, "we must not hope too much. For pity's sake, be firm. That handkerchief may mean nothing; or, if—if he is there, he may be no less lost to us."

"Call to him again, dear father. Tell him we are here."

"Holà!" shouted the Frenchman. "Eustace, if you are up yonder, answer your friends. Holà!"

Again and again he repeated the call, but there was no answer.

"How long they are coming—how long!" cried Helen, looking despairingly towards the sea.

As she spoke, Mr. Jerningham reappeared in the opening of the cliff, with the two boatmen. They came running towards the cave, one of them carrying a rope. Both were barefooted;

and to them the scaling of St. Kentigern's Cave was a small affair. But each opined that for a Southron it would be a difficult business.

"A man can do desperate things when he is fighting for his life," replied Mr. Jerningham. "How is it that this cave was overlooked in our search?"

The men replied, rather vaguely, that the cave was too unlikely a place to search. They might as well have looked on the top of the cliffs.

While Mr. Jerningham asked this question, one of the boatmen stuck his boathook into the cliff, and by the aid of this and the foothold cut in the craggy surface, clambered, cat-like, to the mouth of the little cave, and hung there, peering into the darkness.

"There's something here," he said; and on this the second boatman, at Mr. Jerningham's order, mounted on his shoulders, and hoisted his comrade into the cavern.

There was a pause, an awful interval of hope and terror, and then the boatman shouted to

his mate below to lend a hand there, and in the next instant a limp, lifeless figure, in dust-whitened clothes, was thrust from the narrow mouth of the cave and lowered gently into the boatman's sturdy arms. But not unaided did the boatman receive his burden, Mr. Jerningham's arms were extended to assist in receiving that helpless form; Mr. Jerningham's hands laid it gently upon Helen's shawl, which she had flung off and cast upon the ground a moment before.

Dead or alive? For some moments that was a moot question. Harold Jerningham knelt beside the prostrate figure, with his head bent low upon its breast.

"Thank God!" he said, quietly, with his hand upon the young man's heart. "It *does* beat." He tried to feel the pulse, but a faint groan broke from the white lips as he lifted the wrist.

"His arm is broken," said Mr. Jerningham, in the same quiet tone; and then he turned to Helen, with a sudden burst of feeling. "It

is you who found him," he cried, "I dedicate his life to you."

At any other moment such words might have provoked interrogation; but this was a time in which the wildest words pass unquestioned.

The two boatmen, aided always by Mr. Jerningham, carried the lifeless figure to the boat, where it was gently laid upon a bed, composed of a folded sail, an overcoat, and Helen's shawl, against the rejection of which she pleaded piteously.

"Indeed, I am warmly dressed; I do not want it," she said.

Mr. Jerningham seated himself in the boat, with his son's head upon his knees. He looked down wonderingly at the pale, still face, so wan and haggard with pain. It was so difficult to comprehend his own feelings, and the change that had come upon him, since he had known that this young man was *his*.

"My rival," he said to himself. "No, not my rival. My representative. The image I

can show to the world, and say, 'This is what I was!"

Before they reached the inn at Killalochie, the village knew that the lost had been found. Scouts had posted off from the jetty with the happy tidings, before the boatmen could carry their burden on shore. He was found—alive. Every one seemed to know this by instinct. Half-way between the jetty and the inn, Daniel Mayfield met them, staggering like a drunken man, pale as a corpse.

He hung over the unconscious man with womanly fondness. He pushed Harold Jerningham aside, and asserted his right to his kinsman.

"Let no one stand between me and my boy," he cried, huskily.

Scouts rushed to fetch the village surgeon, other scouts bade the landlady prepare her best room. All the common business of life was suspended in favour of this one stranger, snatched from the jaws of death.

They carried him to the best room, which hap-

pened to be Mr. Jerningham's room, and here he was laid, still unconscious, upon his father's bed.

The local surgeon came, a feeble old man, in spectacles, and sounded and examined the prostrate form, while Daniel Mayfield and Harold Jerningham stood by in agony. The latter hurried from the room, sent for his servant, bade him mount one of the carriage-horses, and gallop to the station, thence by first train to Aberdeen, where he was to find and bring back the best surgeon in the place.

"You'll say he is wanted for Mr. Jerningham, of Pendarvoch," he told the man, who made haste to obey his orders.

The local surgeon had by this time discovered that there was a broken arm, and was eager to set it. But this Mr. Jerningham interfered to prevent.

"I have sent to Aberdeen for another surgeon," he said; "and I would rather you should wait until you have his coöperation. Don't you think it would be as well to apply a cooling lotion, in the meanwhile, to reduce that

swelling? It would be quite impossible to set the bone while the arm and shoulder are in that swollen state."

To this the local surgeon assented, with an air of profound wisdom, and in the broadest Scotch; after which he departed to prepare the lotion, leaving Harold Jerningham and Daniel Mayfield face to face beside the bed.

"How was he found?" asked Daniel.

Whereon Mr. Jerningham told the story of Helen's walk and St. Kentigern's Cave.

"God bless her!" exclaimed Daniel; "and you too, for your interest in this poor boy's fate. He once told me you disliked him. He must have wronged you."

"I do not know that. I have been a creature of whims and prejudices, and may have been prejudiced even against him."

"I thank you so much the more for your goodness in this crisis," answered Daniel, with deep feeling. "And now we need burden you with our troubles no longer. He lives! That one great fact is almost enough for me. I will

fight Death hand to hand beside his bed. He is the only thing I love in this world, and I will do battle for my treasure."

He glanced towards the door as much as to say, "Let me be alone with my nephew."

Mr. Jerningham understood the look, and answered it.

"You must not banish me from this room," he said; "I claim the right to share your watch."

"On what ground?"

"By the right of a father."

"A father's right!" cried Daniel, with a bitter laugh; "that boy has no father. He does not know so much as his father's name. He came to this place to discover it, if he could."

"And he has found a father—a father who will be proud to acknowledge him."

"Acknowledge him!" echoed Daniel, scornfully, "do you think he will acknowledge you? Do you suppose that hatred of you has not been his religion? It has. And you would acknowledge him? You break his mother's

heart, and bequeath to him a heritage of shame, and then, one fine day, four-and-twenty years after that poor heart was broken, you meet your son upon the road-side, and it is your caprice to acknowledge him. You stained his fair young life with the brand of illegitimacy. He can refuse to acknowledge a father on whom the law gives him no claim."

"There shall be no question of illegitimacy," cried Mr. Jerningham, eagerly; "it is in my power to prove him legitimate."

"Yes, by a legal quibble. Do you think he will accept such rehabilitation."

"What other reparation can I make?"

"Conjure the dead from their graves. Call back to life the girl whose womanhood you made one long remorse. Restore the country tradesman and his wife, who died of their daughter's shame. Give back to that young man the years of boyhood and youth, in which he has felt the double sting of poverty and disgrace. Do these things, and your son will honour you."

Mr. Jerningham was silent.

"Let me share your watch," he pleaded presently, in a broken voice.

"You are welcome to do that," answered Daniel; "and when it shall please God to restore him, I will not stand between you and the voice of his heart. Win his affection if you can; no counsel of mine shall weigh against you."

CHAPTER XVI.

RECONCILED.

The Aberdeen surgeon arrived late at night, but the setting of the broken arm was deferred till the next day. The patient was now delirious, and Mr. Ramsay, the great man from Aberdeen, having heard the story of St. Kentigern's Cave, pronounced that rheumatic fever had been induced by cold and exposure in that dismal hermitage.

After this came many dreary days and nights, during which the patient hovered between the realms of life and death, tenderly watched by his uncle and Mr. Jerningham, who relieved each other's guard at his bed-side.

Then came a blessed change, and he was pronounced out of danger. The delirium gave place to a languid apathy, in which he seemed

faintly to recognize the watchers by his bed, but to be too feeble to interest himself in the affairs of this life.

While the patient was still in this stage, Mr. Jerningham persuaded Daniel to return to London, where the ravening editors were clamorous for his presence, and he, yielding to these arguments, left Mr. Jerningham master of the field.

This was what the father wanted, to have his son in his own keeping, to see those dim eyes brighten as they looked at him. To be nurse, valet, companion, friend, and some day, when he had won his son's regard, to say to him suddenly:

"Eustace, forgive me! I am your father!"

While the patient had lain helpless and unconscious, Mr. Jerningham had found the MS. of the great poem, and had read, in those carefully-written pages, the secrets of his son's mind. The perusal of this poem had filled him with pride. He, too, had written verse; but not such verse as this. The grace, the

purity of a mind uncontaminated by vice, were visible here, and touched the heart of the weary worldling.

"The romance of his own life is written here," he said. "It is almost a confession. But how unlike that hateful confession which I published at his age! I, whose ambition was to emulate Rousseau—that pinchbeck philosopher who never ceased to be at heart a lackey."

M. de Bergerac and his daughter left Killalochie for Pendarvoch directly the invalid was pronounced out of danger.

When he was well enough to be moved Mr. Jerningham conveyed him to Pendarvoch, whither he consented to go; but not without some show of wonderment.

"Your friends, M. de Bergerac and his daughter are there," said Mr. Jerningham.

"You are very kind to wish to take me there," replied the invalid; "but I really think it would be better for me to go back to London, to my Uncle Dan. I am quite strong enough for the journey."

"Indeed you are not! Besides, I have set my heart upon your coming to Pendarvoch."

"You are very good. How long is it since my uncle left this place?"

"About five weeks."

"And in that time who has watched and nursed me? For the last week, you, I know. But before that time? I have a vague recollection of seeing you always there—in that chair by the bed. Yes, I had a faint consciousness of your tender nursing. I do not know how to thank you. At Greenlands I used to think you by no means my friend; and yet you have devoted yourself to me for all these weeks! How can I be sufficiently grateful for so much kindness?"

"My presence has not been disagreeable to you?" faltered the guilty watcher.

"Disagreeable! I should be a wretch indeed if I were not grateful—if I were not deeply touched by so much kindness. Your presence has been an unspeakable comfort to me; your face has grown as familiar, and

almost as dear to me, as Uncle Dan's. Forgive me for having ever thought differently—for having misunderstood you so at Greenlands."

"Forgive me, Eustace," said Mr. Jerningham, earnestly.

"Forgive you! For what offence?"

"Do not ask that question. Clasp my hand in yours, so, and say, 'With all my heart, I forgive you.'"

The invalid stared in feeble wonder, but did not repulse the hand that grasped his.

"With all my heart, I forgive whatever wrong your prejudice may have done me."

"It has been a deeper wrong than prejudice. Look at these two hands, Eustace; none can deny the likeness there."

Again the invalid stared wonderingly at the speaker.

"Look!" cried Mr. Jerningham, "look at these clasped hands."

Eustace looked at the two hands linked together. In every detail of form and colour, the likeness between them was perfect.

"Do you remember what De Bergerac said of us the first time we met at his dinner-table?" asked Mr. Jerningham.

"I remember his saying something about a resemblance between you and me."

"A notion which you repudiated."

"I think it was you who first repudiated the idea," said Eustace, with a faint smile.

"It is quite possible. I have been insanely jealous of you. But that is over now. Do you know by what right I have watched by this bed? Do you know why I persuaded your uncle to leave you, that I might watch alone?"

"I can imagine no reason."

"The right which I claimed was the right of a father. Yes, Eustace, it was on your father's knees your head rested as we brought you home from death. It is your father who has watched you day and night through this weary illness."

"Oh, God!" cried Eustace, with a stifled groan. "Is this true?"

"As true as that you and I are here, face to face."

"Do you know that I have sworn to hate you? For the man who broke my mother's heart I can never have any feeling but abhorrence. Your kindness to me I reject and repudiate. We are natural enemies, and have been from the hour in which I first learned the meaning of shame."

"I have heard you plead the cause of Christianity. Is this Christianlike, Eustace?"

"It is natural."

"And you say that Christianity is something higher than nature. Prove it now to me, who have been something of a Pagan. Let me discover the superiority of your creed to my vague Pantheism. Look at me! I, your father, who have never knelt to mortal man, and but too seldom to God, I kneel by your bed, and ask, in abject humility, to be forgiven. I know that I cannot bring back the injured dead. I know that I cannot atone for the past. But if that gentle spirit has found a quiet

haven whence she can look back to those she loved on earth, I *know* it would console her to see me forgiven. Judge me as if your mother stood by your side."

"She would forgive you," murmured Eustace; "God created her to suffer and pardon."

"'And will you refuse the pardon she would have granted? You forgave me just now, when our hands were clasped in friendship. Do you think you can recall that forgiveness? The words have been spoken. I have the ancient belief in the power of spoken words. Eustace, am I to kneel in vain to my only son?"

The young man covered his face with his hands. He had sworn to hate this man, his arch-enemy, and the enemy had taken base advantage of his weakness, and had stolen his affection. This pale, worn face, worn with the weary night-watches of the past six weeks, was not the face of a foe. His mother—yes, she would have forgiven, and her wrongs were greater than his. And if, from the Heaven her penitence had won, she looked back to earth, it

would grieve that gentle spirit to see disunion here.

There was a long pause, and then the son extended his hand to his father.

"For my mother's wrongs I have hated you," he said: "for her sake I forgive you."

This was all. On the same day they travelled to Pendarvoch, and on that night Eustace slept in the picturesque castle that sheltered Helen and her father. All was harmony and affection. The invalid gained strength rapidly, and spent his evenings in a long, panelled saloon, with his father and his two friends.

He told them now, for the first time, the story of that walk which had so nearly cost him his life: how, finding the tide gaining upon him as he neared the inlet of the cliffs, he had sought there some means of reaching the heights above, and, finding none, had essayed to clamber to the Saint's Cave. This feat he had achieved, thanks to his experience as a gymnast; but in the last desperate scramble into the mouth of

the cave he had broken his arm, and from the pain of this injury he had fainted. Of the two nights and days which he had spent in that narrow retreat, he remembered nothing distinctly. He had only a vague sense of having suffered cold and hunger, and of being tormented, almost to madness, by the perpetual roar of the waves, which had seemed to thunder at the very mouth of the cavern, and to be for ever threatening his destruction.

For a month Eustace stayed at Pendarvoch, and during this time the great poem appeared, and won from the press such speedy recognition and kindly appreciation as would scarcely have been accorded to the work of an unknown poet, if Daniel Mayfield and Mr. Jerningham had not both exerted their utmost influence in its behalf. Daniel did, indeed, with his own hand, write more than one of the notices which elevated his nephew to a high rank among the younger poets.

There remained now only the grand question of the new-found son's legitimation; but here

Mr. Jerningham found himself obstinately opposed.

"I will accept your affection with all filial gratitude," said Eustace; "but I will take no pecuniary benefit from your hands, neither will I accept a name which you refused to my mother."

"That is to make your wrongs irreparable."

"All such wrongs are irreparable."

Long, and often repeated, were the arguments held between the father and son upon this subject. But Eustace was not to be moved by argument. From this new-found father, he would receive nothing. For the rest, his literary career had opened brightly, and the fruits of his poem enabled him to enter himself at the Temple as a student of law.

One day in June, Eustace came to Greenlands to renew his suit with M. de Bergerac, by Mr. Jerningham's advice, and this time found his suit prosper.

"Jerningham advises me to consult only my

daughter's heart," said the exile, "and that is yours."

Within a month of this interview there was a quiet wedding at the little Berkshire church, in whose gloomy vault poor Emily Jerningham slumbered—a ceremonial at which Daniel Mayfield shone radiant in an expansive white waistcoat, and with moustache of freshest Tyrian dye. Theodore de Bergerac gave his daughter to her husband; while Harold Jerningham stood by, satisfied with his new *rôle* of spectator.

The bride and bridegroom began their honeymoon in a very unpretentious manner in pleasant lodgings in Folkestone; but one day the bride ventured to suggest that Folkestone was a place of which it was possible for the human mind to grow weary.

"If you would only take me to Switzerland?" Helen pleaded, with her sweetest smile.

"My dear love, you forget that, although the most fortunate of created beings, we are, from the Continental innkeeper's point of view, actual paupers."

"Not quite, dear! There was one little circumstance that no one thought it worth while to mention before our marriage; but perhaps it would be as well for you to be informed of it now."

She handed to him a paper, of a legal and alarming appearance.

It was a deed of gift, whereby Harold Jerningham, on the one part, bestowed upon Helen de Bergerac, the daughter of his very dear friend, Theodore de Bergerac, for the other part, funded property producing something over three thousand a year.

"Good heavens! he has cheated me after all!" cried Eustace.

"He told us the story of your birth, dear; his own remorse, and your noble repudiation of all gifts from him. And then he entreated me to let some benefit from his wealth come to you indirectly through me."

Another wedding, as quiet as the simple ceremony in Berkshire, took place just twelve

months after Mrs. Jerningham's death. For a year Lucy Alford had lived very quietly among her new friends at Harrow, receiving sometimes a package of new books, and a brief, friendly note, from the editor of the *Arcopagus*, for the sole token that she was not utterly forgotten by him. But one day he paid an unexpected visit to the Harrow Parsonage, and finding Miss Alford alone in the pretty garden, asked her to be his wife. Few words were needed for his prayer. The sweet face, with its maiden blushes and downcast eyelids, told him that he was still beloved, still the dearest, and wisest, and greatest of earthly creatures in the sight of Lucy Alford.

While Eustace and his young wife wander, happy as children, amidst Alpine mountains and by the margin of Alpine lakes, Harold Jerningham schemes for his son's future.

"He shall have the Park Lane house, and go into Parliament," resolves the father. "All my old ambitions shall revive in him."

But scheme as he may, there is always the bitter taste of the ashes which remain for the man who has plucked the Dead-Sea apples that hang ripe and red above the path of life.

THE END.

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